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Welcome

Welcome to the second issue of the SPHE Journal (Post Primary). I hope it sustains you in your work, whatever your role in the school.

Implementing SPHE is a process of continuous development. It is a journey that invites you, as a school and as an individual, to 'go as far as you can see because then you can see further'. The journey is easier if you have the benefit of a supportive school environment, permeated by the principles of fair play, respect, tolerance and reward for effort.

If you have interacted with the SPHE Support Service in the past year, I trust you have found it both challenging and rewarding. If we can help you going forward why not get in touch?

John Lahiff

National Co-ordinator SPHE (Post-Primary)



Mr John Lahiff, National Co-ordinator pictured with some members of the SPHE Support Service.

Editorial

The focus of this, the second issue of the SPHE Journal, is to give an overview of the theory of adolescent development and how an understanding of this can influence and enrich our work with young people.

This theme is developed by a mix of articles which range from looking at the experience of SPHE teachers and coordinators on the ground to a more theoretical approach from the world of educational research and counselling. We include articles from the DES Inspectorate and NEPS. We especially welcome the opinions of students on SPHE which gives us food for thought.

We are particularly happy to include some examples of good practice from schools in the Journal. It is our hope that this feature will form an increasingly significant part of the publication in the future.

Teacher Professional Networks

Lynda O'Toole Senior Inspector

The Teacher Education Section (TES) of the Department of Education and Science (DES) introduced a new scheme in October 2005 to provide supplementary funding to support the work of subject associations and teacher professional networks. Currently the scheme is in the second year of a two year pilot phase.

The scheme has been introduced against the backdrop of very clear international and national recognition of the importance of teacher education generally and of the teacher education continuum. The OECD report *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (2005) highlights the key importance of developing teachers' knowledge and skills. Significantly it suggests that this might be done by integrating professional development throughout the teaching career and through the development of teacher learning communities.

At a national level the importance of teacher professional development is enshrined in legislation such as the Education Act (1998)

and the Teaching Council Act (2001). Educationalists generally recognise its key importance as evidenced by the address made by Dr. Séamus McGuinness at the inauguration of the Teaching Council in March 2006 in which he outlined a picture of the teacher who takes responsibility for his/her own professional learning and who is committed to maintaining high levels of professional and pedagogical knowledge.



SPHE Teacher Professional Network (Interim) National Executive: Kate O'Reilly, Ted Kelleher, Josephine O'Neill, Mary Foley, Ann Fahy, Máire Canniffe, Rosemarie O'Neill (Secretary), Deirdre Gallagher (Chairperson), Lorna Davey (Treasurer).

Particular details regarding the scheme and its operation are available from www.tpnetwork.ie. Essentially the scheme provides funding to a registered group based on the size of the student cohort and the

number of teachers in the area concerned. Funding can be at one of three levels and comes in two parts, an allocation to cover planned activities and an allocation to cover support for the work of the National Executives of the networks concerned. The scheme is managed by a representative Steering Committee and is administered by Blackrock Education Centre (BEC) on behalf of TES. To date a total of 34 networks have registered with the scheme.

A particularly welcome aspect of the introduction of the scheme has been the number of new networks which have been created. The establishment and registration of a network of teachers of SPHE is one such development. It offers an opportunity to recognise, affirm and endorse the work of SPHE teachers. It should also help to contribute to the further development of the subject, facilitate discussion and advocacy and support identity-building.

With the establishment of the Teacher Professional Network for teachers of SPHE we now have the opportunity to support yet another important community of professional practice.

The Inspectorate's Work in Evaluating SPHE

Nora Friel Post-primary Inspector

SPHE is now a core subject for all Junior Cycle students and all schools are expected to comply with the requirements of Circular M11/03.

As with all subjects on the curriculum, a subject inspection in SPHE focuses on an evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning in the subject. The aims of evaluations conducted by inspectors are to:

- identify, acknowledge and affirm good practice
- promote continuing improvement in the quality of education offered by schools
- promote self-evaluation and continuous development by schools and staff
- provide an assurance of quality in the education system.

During a subject inspection in SPHE, the following areas, as they relate to SPHE, are evaluated:

- Subject provision and whole school support
- Planning and preparation
- Teaching and learning
- Assessment

Detailed information on the process and procedures for subject inspection is available in 'A Guide to Subject Inspection at Second Level'. This booklet can also be downloaded from the Inspectorate section of the Department of Education and Science website www.education.ie

The following are some examples of good practice in the delivery of SPHE taken from subject inspection reports issued to schools:

"A core team of SPHE teachers has been established in the school. Teachers are assigned to the subject by consultation and the same teacher brings a class group through the three-year cycle"

"The SPHE subject department is well organised, and coordinated in a committed, enthusiastic and efficient manner"

"A coherent three-year programme of work has been developed. The programme of work for each year group is broken down into modules and topics, and each topic outlines the specific learning outcomes, methodologies and resources, on a week-by-week basis"

"The team is facilitated and supported to avail of the specialised in-service training that supports the successful implementation of SPHE"

"The range of methodologies provided students with opportunities for active, participatory and experiential learning"

"A system has been developed for students to file and store personal materials and the school reports to parents on students' progress in SPHE"

The following are some examples of recommendations regarding the delivery of SPHE, taken from subject inspection reports issued to schools:

"Management should make provision for the timetabling of SPHE for **all** Junior Cycle students, as required by CL M11/03"

"The common programmes of work should be individually tailored to meet the needs of individual class groups. They should focus on student learning and thus include the learning outcomes for each topic, as well as reference to resources and methodologies"

"The sharing of good practice regarding the effective use of participatory and experiential learning methodologies should be considered as part of subject planning"

"Assessment as a tool for learning, including student reflection and self-assessment, should be explored. Planning for the assessment of students' progress should be incorporated with planning for teaching and learning"

To support the implementation of SPHE, schools are encouraged to avail of the many and varied supports available to them from the SPHE Support Service.

Young Males Pay a High Price due to Men's Absence from SPHE

Beatrice Barry Murphy

**THE EVIL THAT MEN DO
LIVES AFTER THEM. THE
GOOD IS OFT INTERRED
WITH THEIR BONES.**

William Shakespeare

Immediately the question emerges...How do we stop the good being interred with men's bones? Or perhaps more to the point...How do men stop their good being interred with their bones? Who responds to this question? Men? Women? Both? I'm interested in responding to the "how" because I lose out, if men bury their goodness. I'll use a story from my own experience to explore my response.

A few years ago, I worked with a group of eighteen year old male students. Self Esteem was the area of exploration. The aim of the workshop was to give the participants the opportunity to experience how it would be to give and to receive positive feedback from their peers. One participant, I'll call him Tom, wasn't particularly enthusiastic about S.P.H.E. Sometimes he'd meet me in the school corridor, throw his eyes heavenward and say "That stuff you do Miss... it melts me head". Reluctantly, Tom took up his position in the 'Hot Seat'. As his peers gave him feedback on the things that they enjoyed and liked about

him, I could see Tom was taking in what they were saying, and it was obvious that he was feeling the effects of what he was hearing. Finally, when all the students had taken the opportunity to participate in the exercise, I asked them to share what it had been like for them. Tom was the first to break the silence with "Well, I'd just like to say one thing...and it's this... I'm glad I wasn't dead before I heard all that about myself". So this young man had heard from his peers, about some of the good that was in him, which enabled him to touch into his own goodness, and thereby afforded for himself a greater possibility of not having this goodness interred with his bones.

There is something about men allowing themselves to get in touch with the goodness that is in them, before they can let that goodness out, and not bring it with them to the grave. The question is...How will they allow themselves to do this? What messages do they get, which facilitates the building of this giant padlock, which keeps them holding in their loveliness? Who imparts these messages of destruction? Is it mothers, fathers, or peers? Or is it a combination of all three?

The absence of men, in the area of S.P.H.E. in our schools is a major cause for concern. As I scroll through the list of 120 names on our Spring Inservice Training schedule, I note only twelve of the one hundred and twenty applicants are male.

Some years ago when delivering the Substance Abuse Prevention Programme (SAPP) I got some insight into the extent of men's resistance to engage with the experiential methodology used in SPHE. As I chatted at tea break with one of the three men who had opted to be a participant I was amazed to hear him say – "None of the men on my staff know that I am doing this kind of stuff". He expressed his anxiety about how he would cope if they found out. I got a sense of how threatening this must be for him. He was feeling fearful and this man was in his 40's. Peer pressure is a struggle long after we have left the classroom and our teenage years behind. The 'this kind of stuff' talked about by the man in the S.A.P.P. group is 'Personal Development' which facilitates us to get in touch with our needs, to allow our vulnerability, ultimately to get to know, and be, and to express the totality of who we are. I'm wondering are many men threatened by this challenge?

There is a serious shortage of males to deliver SPHE. Older women are role models for girls and young women. Older men are role models for boys and young men. Boys and young men need men's support to engage with the challenges and opportunities offered by the SPHE programme.

As I conclude I won't cajole. I won't control. I will invite men to come along and talk the talk of SPHE, and even more exciting still, to walk the walk.

Teaching SPHE to Boys

Mary Walsh Teacher, Colaiste An Spioraid Naoimh, Cork

I love teaching SPHE!... Maybe I should qualify that statement or at least put it in context? I teach English, French, Drama and SPHE. I have five classes of SPHE a week and mixed in with my "normal" subjects I'm really enjoying my SPHE classes.

I enjoy talking to and with the boys. I love hearing what they have to say, sometimes challenging them and sometimes being challenged by them. For me SPHE has elements of an English class with discussion and opinions and also drama with its role-plays and active involvement. The boys, in their own words, like SPHE as they "get a chance to speak" and they "need a break from school". In Colaiste An Spioraid Naoimh we have a very supportive Headmaster, an enthusiastic and determined SPHE Co-Ordinator and a team of teachers who volunteered to teach the subject. These aspects along with small classes ensure in my opinion the smooth running of our SPHE programme. It's a subject taken seriously by management and then in turn by the boys too.

There's no denying that I have bad days. On those days I come out of my SPHE class and I wonder what did I achieve there? What did I teach them today? The truth is however that I could ask myself the same questions on a bad day after French class but for some reason I'm more annoyed by a bad day at the SPHE office! Perhaps that's because it's a new subject or because of the nature of the subject?

Perhaps it's to do with my own need to quantify or assess the subject. I know I'm disappointed too if I see a boy mistreat another and I find myself thinking to myself, "But we covered that in SPHE class. He should know better than to act like that!"

Still I am realistic, I realise Rome wasn't built in a day. I'm in SPHE for the long-haul and to be honest I'm glad and happy to be there because I think with SPHE I can make a difference. I see SPHE as 'distilled teaching'. Everything I do in SPHE I do in my French or English class anyway but in those classes the subjects and learning are my priorities - the SPHE class however allows me to put the book down, slow down and discuss. **The SPHE class is about them - they know the difference and so do I and we're both grateful for its existence.**



Teacher Mary Walsh with her SPHE class in Colaiste An Spioraid Naoimh, Bishopstown, Cork.

Addressing Suicide in the Context of SPHE

John Lahiff National Co-ordinator

SPHE cannot be divorced from a caring, whole-school approach and most schools have excellent pastoral care/support structures in place. **A caring school protects against suicide by providing diverse opportunities for mastery and success, promoting warm accepting relationships with students and their families, developing protocols for observing and referring students who are troubled and encouraging students to remain in education.**

The broad aims of SPHE reflect a holistic approach to the promotion of health and well-being. Students are facilitated to reflect

on needs, rights and responsibilities and mental health promotion is core.

In SPHE, knowledge, skills and attitudes are addressed in an integrated way. Skills are promoted that relate to personal competencies, self-esteem, emotional literacy, the ability to relate with others, sexuality, who and what influences me, how I make decisions, empowerment, substance use, personal safety and when and how to seek help.

The focus of SPHE is on developing competencies to care for self and others, to make the most of opportunities which life presents and to build resilience for the hard times. Through the use of participative

methods in SPHE classes, a culture is fostered that encourages young people to talk about their feelings and ask for help. Topics such as anxiety and depression are discussed and reference is made to help agencies.

If the issue of suicide emerges in the context of SPHE it is dealt with sensitively, and empathically. If it emerges as a concern, an awareness of the context and the limits of what can beneficially be addressed in the classroom is recommended. An awareness of what other supports are available and links with the school's pastoral supports and school policy are essential.

Recognition of Students at Risk of Suicide

Recognition of Students at Risk

- Unexpected reduction of academic performance.
- Ideas/themes of depression, death, suicide.
- Change in mood and marked emotional instability.
- Significant grief or stress.
- Withdrawal from relationships.
- Physical symptoms with emotional cause.

Warning Signs of Suicidal Behaviour

- Writing about suicide
- Speaking about suicide
- Listening to songs praising suicide
- Art work about suicide
- Threats and statements of intent
- Preoccupation with a known suicide
- Life threatening risk taking behaviour
- Giving away treasured possessions

Risk Situations

- Separation from friends, girl/boyfriend, classmates etc.
- Death or loss of a loved one or significant other person.
- Termination of a love relationship.
- Interpersonal conflict or losses.
- Legal or disciplinary problems.
- Peer group pressure and acceptance of self destructive behaviour.
- Bullying and victimisation.
- Disappointment with school results and failure in studies.
- High demands in school during examination period.
- Unemployment and poor finances.
- Unwanted pregnancy and abortion.
- HIV or other STIs.
- Serious physical illness.
- Natural disasters.

Taking Action

- Believe it
- Check it out
- Be calm
- Actively listen
- Show you care
- Do not say something like: "That is stupid"
- Do say something like: "Tell me more about your feelings so I can help"
- Do not leave the student alone
- Get help
- Be honest
- Do not promise confidentiality
- Contact parents/guardians and families
- Young people saying that they are 'fine' does not necessarily mean that they are ok.

NEPS' Role in Suicide Prevention

Ann Marie Sheehan Regional Director, NEPS

The psychological service of the Dept of Education, set up in the early 60's, became The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) in 1999. **From its earliest days, the psychological service strongly advocated that education was for life, and this was reflected in its work in many areas of social, personal and health education.**

Space doesn't permit a listing of the various projects we were involved in over the years but we were, and remain, highly committed to promoting mental health in schools and to supporting SPHE as a key to realising that objective.

While there is a common perception that the main role of NEPS is to carry out psychological assessments (and there is a constant demand for them), we continue to regard prevention and early intervention work as vital to our role in the education system. We see ourselves supporting schools in developing and implementing systems which are relevant to all children e.g. developing screening procedures to identify children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), offering

advice and training on behaviour or helping with policy development. We offer consultation about individual students or groups of students, and work with networks or clusters of guidance counsellors, support teachers, learning support and SEN teachers. With guidance counsellors, for example, advice on management of cases would be available, including advice on students expressing suicidal ideation.



Having a plan facilitates a more effective response in the event of a tragedy. Our track record on helping schools respond in the aftermath of an incident is good, but we would like to be able to do more about prevention. A new edition of 'Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools' will be published shortly after Easter and contains a separate section on suicide, including a

Over the last two years, a very large number of schools have been advised with regard to the development of a Critical Incident Management Plan.

focus on prevention, on warning signs and some guidelines for responding if concerns arise about particular students. **It emphasises the importance of good SPHE provision as the main vehicle for mental health promotion.** Guidelines for schools on the issue of external suicide prevention programmes are also offered.

NEPS sat on the steering committee of 'Reach Out', the action plan for suicide prevention and is now represented on the Expert Advisory Group of the National Office for Suicide Prevention. Planning for the implementation of the education elements of the strategy has just commenced.

The approach advocated by NEPS is the promotion of school policies and programmes that promote mental health and well-being; the development of school care systems that address the causes of emotional distress in young people; the early identification of students at risk; the provision of targeted interventions for this group of students; and work at interagency level to support the promotion of mental health and to facilitate access to services that are responsive to the needs of young people.

Confidentiality... What about SPHE Class?

A supportive school climate is essential if SPHE is to be effective and the student is to be protected. In such an environment people feel valued, self esteem is fostered, respect tolerance and fairness are evident, uniqueness and difference are valued and there is support for those experiencing difficulties. This involves an ethos where staff and students are respectful and respected as individuals. A first step in developing such a climate is the drawing up of Ground Rules or a Class Contract. The rules/contract makes explicit the roles, rights and responsibilities of all concerned in the learning process. Learning from real life experience is at the core of SPHE and sensitive and controversial issues can arise. Almost any issue can prove sensitive to an individual. Teachers should establish from the beginning that it is inappropriate to disclose some personal information.

The concept of confidentiality within the classroom needs to be clarified. The principles of confidentiality required in The Child Protection Guidelines provide a model for confidentiality in school generally. Teachers should not give unconditional guarantees of

confidentiality. It should be explained to students that in some circumstances the teacher may need to seek advice on an issue raised in class or to tell someone what has been revealed in class (e.g. in matters relating to child protection to tell the Designated Liaison Person-DLP). Information is shared in accordance with the principles of "Need to Know." The Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines states: "Only people directly involved in the handling of a matter need to know." Students need to be clear when this arises what will be done with the information and who will have access to it.

Outside of this the school should ask how much needs to be known about a student's private life in order to care for them and deal with them in a respectful manner. It is important to recognise that we don't need to know intimate personal matters in a student's life in order to treat them in a respectful, caring and supportive manner.

As teachers, if we have personal issues happening in our own lives which may effect our normal functioning, how many of us would feel our class and

colleagues would need to know this in order to respond to us in a supportive respectful manner?

Teachers need to respect the privacy of each student and his/her family and to draw clear boundaries for all discussions. Students should be made aware of the importance of their own privacy and the privacy of their families. The SPHE class is about developing skills, imparting information and reflecting on attitudes with a definite Syllabus and Guidelines. It is not a "free for all" without rules or parameters. **It's important it doesn't turn into a "gossip class" for students or provide "gossip fodder" in the staff room.** The SPHE class is not the context for disclosure of personal, private information but students should be made aware of support structures in the school should they need help.

Schools need to clarify and document their attitude to and policy on confidentiality. All members of the school community need to be clear about the rules of confidentiality. Information about students should not be passed on indiscriminately.

Why the Use of Scare Tactics Are Ineffective in Health Education

Teachers parents, employers and indeed government bodies often feel that they are getting 'value for money' out of a talk or advertisement that has an immediate impact on an audience – that appears to shock us out of our complacency about drug taking, drinking, dangerous driving etc.

These high-impact messages have in fact very little staying power or impact on behaviour change. Most people although genuinely shocked or moved by such campaigns or messages will revert to their previous behaviours. Despite knowing this for over three decades now, educators often continue to fall back on risk-awareness and dire warnings as the backbone of health education. Why? Because it feels like 'common sense'.....'give them the gorey details, outline the risks and behaviour will change'. The behaviour change sought here is on par with a sudden religious conversion, indoctrination or brain washing. While awareness may be raised in these scenarios; health awareness and health education are not synonymous.

The use of scare tactics can in fact have the following effects:



Warning fatigue

People become habituated and immune to the messages if they are overexposed to them, resulting in diminished response rates and eventually paying no attention at all.



Risk-factor-phobia

People become so sensitive to scary messages that they become increasingly (paranoid) fearful and anxious about the hazards in their daily lives and environment leading to a sense of powerlessness.



Stigmatisation & victim blaming

These messages are not helpful to either the target audience or the general public and can lead to new outcasts. For example, the portrayal of people in wheelchairs aimed at stopping young male drivers speeding stigmatises people with a disability.



Forbidden fruit effect/ Jaws Syndrome

Another common response to scary messages is an increased desire for the "forbidden" substance or activity. Scare tactics and bans can lead to deliberate defiance, particularly in the teenage population. They actually seek to do more of the risk-taking behaviour.



The Surrender

The risk portrayed is so powerful and pervasive that people give up hope of protecting themselves and do not feel in control. "Everything causes cancer (or whatever) so why bother!"

What helps to change behaviour?

- Motivation (reason or necessity)
- Information (knowledge/what to do)
- Skills for change (knowing how to do it)
- Enabling environment (having support)

How the SPHE programme might assist this process of behaviour change:

- It is a programme which is spiral and developmental and is not just a one off event or series of unconnected events or topics (behaviour change takes time and is a process not an 'instant' conversion)
- It allows young people time and space for reflection and discussion to look at what motivates them, what influences them, what are their values and attitudes, where and how these values and attitudes are formed and how they in turn inform their health choices in life
- It promotes self-esteem
- It addresses attitudes and behaviours as well as knowledge
- It is based on good research and sound theory of what works
- It is age and developmental stage appropriate
- It employs interactive, dynamic teaching methods
- It teaches skills such as listening skills, assertiveness skills, responsible decision making skills and reflection skills
- It provides a supportive climate in which students can explore issues about health and make informed choices.

References: Jones et al. - Health Promotion Messages – to scare or not to scare (Unpublished Paper).

Galahad SMS Ltd/AERC 2005 - Alcohol Education – A guide for teachers, employers and other programme developers .

The Importance of the Teacher in SPHE

In a 2004 study of Irish students' experiences of SPHE 331 First and Second Year students nationwide completed questionnaires and 42 took part in small focus groups on their experience of the SPHE programme. As the different elements of this research were analysed and the emerging themes and trends were refined, one major finding emerged. **The single most important variable in young people's experience of SPHE is the teacher.**

What the students value in their teachers is that they would show respect for them and ensure, through fair discipline, that they would show respect for each other, that they would like their students, be fair, not cross, respect confidentiality, be fun, listen to the students' point of view and do not preach to them. Variations on this list emerged repeatedly, both in the open-ended questions and in the focus groups.

Similar findings have emerged from several recent publications. Smyth wrote 'Unless formal programmes to enhance pastoral care and pupil development within the school are underpinned by emphasising positive pupil-teacher interaction at the informal level they are likely to be of limited utility.' In a study of effective PSHE in Scotland and England, one of Coggans and McKellar's conclusions was that there is a significant link between greater health empowerment and relationships between, and respect among, staff and pupils. This quality of respect is echoed directly by students in a 1999 study of who should teach PSHE; a 'respected' teacher 'because everyone will listen to what they have to say.'

This centrality of the role of teachers in effective SPHE programmes is acknowledged by the DES's SPHE Curriculum 'all teaching is challenging, but teaching SPHE is a particular challenge, demanding a range of skills and a high degree of sensitivity.' **The value of developing a core of trained SPHE teachers cannot be overestimated.**

Smyth, E. Do Schools Differ? Academic and Personal Development among Pupils in Second-Level Sector, ERSI (Dublin: Oak Tree Press, 1000) p.224

Coggans, N. and McKellar, S. Health Promoting Schools: An Investigating into the Wider Context of Health Education in Schools, (Glasgow: Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Strathclyde, 1996)

"Who Should Teach PSHE?" Healthlines Magazine, 1999, Vol. 58, pp.16-17, p.17

Ireland, SPHE Curriculum, (Dublin: Government Stationery Office, 2000) p.6

Social, Emotional and Personal Education is Central to School Improvement

Katherine Weare University of Southampton

Katherine Weare is Professor of Education at University of Southampton. Her recent publications include 'Promoting Mental, Emotional and Social Health: A Whole School Approach' (Routledge), 'Developing the Emotionally Literate School' (Sage) and a report to the DfES on 'What Works in Promoting Children's Emotional and Social Competence'.

Enlightened schools are starting to realise that the goals of Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) are not marginal, they are in fact absolutely central to their core mission of creating effective learners who are well balanced, ethical and engaged human beings, able to take their place in society. This short paper will briefly explore the evidence for the relationship of emotional and social education to three areas of core business for schools - learning, behaviour and staff effectiveness.

Emotional and social factors are at the heart of the learning process and support learning directly. Recent research in neuroscience on how the brain processes information is revolutionising our thinking by demonstrating that the brain is fundamentally an emotional rather than a rational organ (Damasio, 2000; LeDoux, 1998). We now know for example that people only pay attention to what is meaningful emotionally, that stress prevents thinking and learning, and that sound rationality and decision making cannot be dispassionate – they have to be based on an assessment of value that is at root emotional. If learners are to respond to an experience, to remember it, and to change as a result of it then the learning must be personally compelling, deeply felt and vividly real. The evidence for this link is starting to emerge in children's academic results, which is causing schools across the world to sit up and take notice of an area they have traditionally dismissed as soft and marginal.

Many programmes of social and emotional learning both aim to, and succeed in, improving children's behaviour in schools and classrooms, their attitudes to school, and their attitudes to themselves as learners, and result in a wide range of educational gains, including improved school attendance, higher motivation, and higher morale.

Social, emotional and behavioural skills contribute to teacher effectiveness and well-being. If school staffs are trying to help pupils develop social, emotional and behavioural skills they too need these skills. Such skills inform professional competence as well as learning since teaching is a fundamentally social activity, demanding high levels of emotional sensitivity, good self-management, empathy and the ability to make relationships. Programmes to promote social, emotional and behavioural skills have been shown to

have a beneficial impact on staff well-being, and help tackle the high and rising levels of staff stress (DfES, 2003) and improve staff retention.

However not all programmes are effective. Programmes need to be evidence based. Several international reviews have identified the characteristics of effective programmes (Elias, 1997; Weare and Gray, 2003; Durlak and Wells, 1997; Wells et al, 2003)

Effective Programmes:

- Are coherent and well planned
- Are targeted at the whole school community, not just at children with problems
- Take a whole school approach, integrating emotional and social learning and well-being into all aspects of school life and work
- Create appropriate climates, that foster warm relationships, encourage participation, allow people to think for themselves, and provide clear rules and positive expectations
- Include explicit teaching/learning to develop key skills, attitudes and behaviours, in pupils and staff
- Involve pupils, parents and the community
- Promote the emotional and social competence and well-being of all staff
- Are supported by outside agencies, working together in a co-ordinated way
- Start early (i.e. in the primary school), last for many years, and do not expect instant results
- As well as providing a universal approach for all, also identify and target vulnerable and at risk groups and tackle emotional, social and behavioural problems when they first show themselves

Back in 1996, Goleman in his book Emotional Intelligence carried out a major review of the evidence and concluded that emotional and social abilities are more influential than conventional IQ for school success, as well as for personal and career success. The implications of this realisation are just starting to have a serious impact on mainstream education, and provides the potential to revolutionise our thinking about the role of SPHE in school improvement.

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What Makes SPHE Work?



Mary Hanafin, Minister for Education and Science with Rachel Comerford, Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore at the launch of the RSE Report.

The Report "RSE in the Context of SPHE: An Assessment of the Challenges to Full Implementation of the Programme in Post-Primary Schools" was launched by the Department of Education and Science and the Crisis Pregnancy Agency on March 13th 2007. It is based on research carried out in Irish Post Primary Schools between late 2004 and 2006.

The role of the principal was found to be central to the success of RSE in our schools. In addition the researchers identify a number of core characteristics that influence the implementation of the Relationship and

Sexuality Education programme in post-primary schools. They present these along a continuum of low to high implementation. Because RSE is a component of SPHE these core characteristics apply to SPHE as a whole.

Schools with low-level implementation of SPHE tend to locate themselves towards the left side of this chart. The suggestion is that more effective implementation of SPHE/RSE is achieved by moving your school to the right on as many of these core characteristics as possible.

Factors that Influence the Implementation of RSE in Post-Primary Schools

RSE is a component of SPHE, therefore these core characteristics apply to SPHE as a whole.

Characteristic	Low level Implementation	High level Implementation
Co-ordination of SPHE/RSE	Low-level co-ordination of SPHE within the school/sometimes no SPHE co-ordinator.	Appointed and committed SPHE co-ordinator who works with SPHE teachers and the entire staff to prioritise SPHE and RSE. The co-ordination of SPHE is designated a Post of Responsibility by school management within the school.
Parental involvement	Little or no consultation with parents on the content of RSE or when formulating policy.	Parents consulted at the time of drawing up policy. Parents regularly informed about the content of RSE.
Status	Within the school community the value of RSE/SPHE is not recognised. The co-ordinator and teachers struggle amidst an atmosphere of ambivalence towards the subject.	SPHE/RSE is prioritised and valued by all staff members. The subject enjoys status in the planning of school 'business' generally and also among the students.
Teacher training	Few or no teachers trained while teaching RSE/SPHE, little awareness of training. Lack of access to extra training services.	A pool of well-equipped teachers using experiential learning methodologies for RSE. School provides additional funding for staff-wide training. Teachers using personal time to train in RSE/SPHE. High level of access to extra training services.
Teacher comfort	Virtual avoidance of RSE by teachers due to personal discomfort with the topic of sexuality. Lack of an RSE policy within the school and reluctance to use experiential learning methodologies. Fear of parental misgivings due to poor communication and of lack of clarity on the matter of school ethos.	Positive confrontation of all RSE issues. Trained in facilitating openness and confidentiality amongst students. Personal level of confidence in negotiating any ethos issues. Supported by a clear RSE policy, school management, and a clear and open relationship with parents.
Clarity among teachers about what can be taught	Teachers are extremely nervous about the topics they can 'safely' address and consequently avoid certain or all aspects of RSE teaching.	Teachers are confident about the boundaries of acceptability within RSE teaching and move comfortably through all aspects of the RSE programme in accordance with the school's RSE policy.
Student perspectives and understanding	Students feel that teachers are disinterested in and uncomfortable with RSE; they are dissatisfied with what is taught and are not accustomed to open discussion of relationships and sexuality. They are not consulted on RSE policy or the programme.	Students have confidence in their RSE teachers and enjoy RSE classes. They are reasonably or very satisfied with the programme content and generally feel comfortable and able to discuss relationships and sexuality. Students are consulted about RSE policy and the programme, possibly through the mechanism of the Students Council.
Whole-school support	Lack of personal interest in RSE for many staff. Low levels of communication and awareness around RSE/SPHE training and personal development. Major difficulties around teacher selection. Little or no parental involvement.	A large number of staff trained in RSE/SPHE. High level of openness and flexibility around RSE teaching and timetabling. Regular planning and evaluation of RSE progress, sharing of ideas, and 'moral support'. Actively and explicitly outlining to parents how RSE is taught.

More Than A Phase – A Resource Guide for the Inclusion of Young Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Learners

Frances Shearer RSE Co-ordinator

The resource guide 'More Than A Phase' was developed by the organisation 'Pobal' and sent to all schools in late October '06.



The aim of the guide is to help schools to ensure the full inclusion of young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students. The resource is in the form of a clear and user-friendly folder. It focuses on four aspects of school life that need consideration: Policies, Procedures, Programmes and Physical Environment.

The section on policies asks schools to look at all relevant policies with a view to ensuring the explicit inclusion of young gay people. The section on procedures contains useful information on dealing with homophobic bullying and harassment. The section on programmes asks schools to consider whether the programmes they are offering promote inclusion and diversity.

Finally the section on physical environment offers a checklist of questions relating to the physical safety of young gay people in schools.

The Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) element of SPHE aims to help young people to understand and to be respectful of their own sexuality and that of others. The SPHE Support Service offers training days on all aspects of RSE, including sexuality and sexual orientation.

For information consult the SPHE website:

www.sphe.ie

or the RSE Office, Dromcondra Education Centre, 01 8576400/8576422.

Anti-bullying Day in Limerick

Anne Kelly SPHE Coordinator
Christina Faust Resource Teacher

During the 05/06 school year as a consequence of updating its policy on bullying, John the Baptist C.S., Hospital, Co. Limerick, organised an anti-bullying event.

Initially we were very ambitious and thought that an anti-bullying week would be a good idea. Volunteers from all subject areas came forward to link with us in designing lessons and all staff agreed to co-operate.

We realised very quickly that an anti-bullying week was too ambitious for a first outing so we decided that January 23rd was going to be an 'Anti-Bullying Day'. The following plan of action was set out:

- Every class should have an input on bullying on that day, including an overview of the anti-bullying policy

- No teacher should be overwhelmed with work on materials that were not familiar to them
- Lessons needed to be age appropriate and accompanied by teacher notes
- Materials used should not repeat previous work in SPHE classes
- All materials including handouts were to be photocopied for teachers.

We identified five different lessons i.e. one for every year group. These included worksheets, role-plays, posters and discussions. The materials were sourced from within the school or ordered in where necessary. We decided that all students would have their anti-bullying lesson at 10.15am and the teacher who was timetabled for that period would deliver it. As a result they would all become SPHE teachers for 40 minutes!

We photocopied all materials and disseminated them to the relevant staff the day before the Anti-Bullying Day. If they were nervous they never said – all acted like the true professionals they are. Students got a bit of a surprise when they were told by their Science/Maths/English etc teachers to "put away the books as today's lesson is on anti-bullying!"

Any fears we had were without foundation. Everything went smoothly. The staff really enjoyed the challenge. Some expressed surprise at the openness of students and felt that they saw each other in a new light. There was a definite air of excitement at break-time as staff discussed their experiences.

We look forward to developing our Anti-Bullying Day in the future.

Healthy Eating at Borrisokane Community College

Borrisokane Community College caters for over four hundred students from a mainly rural catchment area. The majority of students travel to school by bus and arrive at the school from 8.15 in the morning and remain on the school grounds during lunchtime.

In 1999 it was decided to upgrade the canteen facilities for students. At that time the Parents Association got involved in the project and built a canteen with seating for all students at lunchtime. The following year a state of the art kitchen was built. The facilities now available far surpass the current Department of Education guidelines for canteen and dining facilities in new schools. The canteen is run by a private operator and in the first three years the biggest selling food item was chips. Parents and teachers were very concerned at the type of food available in the canteen and a committee was set up to review the situation. The committee consisted of two teachers, two parents from the parents committee, two students from the students council and the manager of the canteen. A dietician from the Health Service Executive

joined the group and gave guidance in drawing up a Healthy Eating Policy. As part of formulating the policy students were surveyed on the type of foods they would like to see available.



An important part of developing the policy was raising awareness among students of what Healthy Eating means. This was done through a Healthy Eating Week taking place in the school. An Bord Bia visited the school and gave talks to students on the topic. A poster competition took place during the week with prizes for a number of students. The menu in the canteen was totally revamped and now dinner is available each

day at lunchtime. It costs only €2.50 and include such items as chicken, vegetables and potatoes, lasagne, shepherd's pie, fish, chicken curry, etc. A full range of rolls and sandwiches is available at morning break and lunchtime. Fizzy drinks and sweets are not sold. Chips are available as a treat on one day each week. The canteen is open each morning before school when students can purchase a hot drink and cereals. The school is part of the School Meals Programme which allows some student get their lunchtime meal free.

It is important to always keep the idea of Healthy Eating alive in the school and have promotions at various times. During the last school year a fish promotion day was held in the school when BIM put on talks for all students on Healthy Eating and gave a free fish meal to all students and staff.

The success of Healthy Eating at Borrisokane Community College is due to the involvement of all the partners: students, teachers, parents, canteen staff and the HSE in promoting the topic on a continuous basis.

The Role of SPHE in Emotional and Mental Health

Gerry Farrell Psychotherapist

Apart from psychiatric illness, the ABC of Barriers to Good Emotional and Mental Health are Addictions, Bereavement and Conflict. These three demons present the greatest threats to the emotional and mental health of young people. In fact looking back over thirty years of practice as a psychotherapist I cannot think of a single case history that could not be placed into one or other of these categories.

One of the most striking things about young people in counselling is the impact insight has on their capacity to cope. Being able to name the components of what it is they are experiencing greatly increases their capacity to do something about their situation. For this reason, when it comes to younger people, the education component of counselling is often just as effective as the processing component.

Here lies the benefit of the SPHE programme in the school. In this class the phenomenon that young people are experiencing is explored and they can gain a greater insight into the dynamics of addictions, of bereavement and of conflict.

This enables the young person to gain a healing insight into their reactions and behaviours.

It must be remembered that in second level, students are learning to be abstract in their thinking and they have an enormous capacity to absorb ideas and reflect on these. Young people tend to respond more positively to descriptive insight as opposed to prescriptive direction. This is what SPHE has to offer as opposed to parental control. Not that the latter is not appropriate, of course it is, but it may not hold the same influence as an insight that the young person has gained through knowledge and reflection.

When a young person experiences rejection in a relationship, for example, they can have a reaction that could potentially pose a huge threat not only to their emotional and mental health but also to their very survival. When this experience takes place in the context of understanding the grieving process, the young person has some handle on what is happening to them. The insight provides the language to enable expression of the feelings that might otherwise lead to self sabotaging behaviours. Equally, in the case of addictions, insight and

awareness act as powerful shields to impulsive and dangerous experimentation.

However it is in the area of conflict that insight gained through the SPHE programme plays its greatest role. A young teenager is moving from a concrete way of thinking, where everything is black or white, or good or bad, or awful or awesome, to a more abstract way of perceiving the world. Through this development of abstract thought the understanding of conflict takes on new meaning. Students can come to understand that they neither need to demonise nor idolise parents or teachers and that having differences is more normal than continual harmony. **But they also come to an understanding of internal conflicts as in wants and impulses versus needs and safety. SPHE plays a huge role in helping the young person gain these subtle insights.**

It would be wrong though to see SPHE as the panacea for all mental and emotional health difficulties in young people. There is still the powerful influence of what behaviours and coping skills are modelled for the young person at home. But insight is a powerful player and SPHE aims to provide that insight.



Adolescence is a stage occurring from age 11 to 21, which marks a child's transition to young adulthood. It is generally a time of self-discovery in which young people aim to define their place in the world.

During adolescent development, children complete puberty and physical growth. They also develop important social, emotional and intellectual skills, while striving toward independence and autonomy.

Adolescence can be a challenging time for teenagers as well as their families and other significant people in their lives. In the quest for independence at this time, many adolescents start questioning parental authority and often show signs of rebelliousness, which can create family tension and school/classroom tension.

Teenagers also typically struggle with an increasing need to belong in society. As a result, many spend more time with friends than family. This allows teens to develop and practice social skills. However, it is also within this setting that adolescents may face issues regarding peer pressure, sexual intercourse

and experimentation with alcohol and drugs.

While this is a challenging time for all adolescents some can find this stage more difficult than others and feelings of stress, confusion and depression arising from family, academic and social life could overwhelm them. This can put adolescents at risk for dropping out of school, running away from home, joining gangs, developing substance use problems, indulging in risky sexual behaviours, developing eating disorders or self-harming and other types of self-destructive behaviours.

Support and guidance by significant adults in the teenager's life at this stage is vital and a very effective medium for promoting values, academic success, self-confidence and self-esteem. Not only parents but also teachers and the school environment are crucial at this time.

It is important that teachers and parents are aware of these changes so as to provide the best support they can.

This support in the SPHE class takes the form of:

- Allowing time for discussion of important topics such as puberty, sex, peer pressure, influences, making decisions and substance use.
- Developing skills for expression of feelings and thoughts and exploring how one can manage these
- Providing a non-judgmental and safe space in which teens can learn from each other and the teacher
- Contributing towards the students sense of belonging and integration in the school.

What Students Say..

"I found that to have your say heard, you must listen to others first"

"I learned to relax when I'm stressed either from school or getting in trouble"

"It helps to build confidence so you can do better in other subjects"

"It's a waste of time as this is our Junior Cert. We could've spent more time focussing on other subjects. We study the same information in Science"

"Science is about the physical side of sex education. SPHE is about feelings. You don't get that in Science"

"In SPHE I learned how to listen, how to be kind to someone, stand up for yourself, don't be ashamed of who and what you are and the most thing I learned about was bullying"

"I learned about new people but mostly I learned about myself"

Post-Primary Social, Personal and Health Education Junior Cycle Programme

MODULE	Year One	Year Two	Year Three
Belonging and Integrating	Coping with Change Joining a new group Appreciating Difference Bullying is everyone's business Coping with Loss	Looking Back, Looking Forward Group work Family ties	Goal Setting for Third Year Work Contract
Self Management	Organising Myself Organising my work at home and at school Balance in my life	What motivates me? Study Skills	Organising my time Planning for effective study Coping with examinations
Communication Skills	Express yourself Learning to listen Passive, Assertive and Aggressive communication	Assertive communication	Learning to communicate Communication in situations of conflict
Physical Health	Body Care Healthy Eating Exercise	Body Care and Body Image	Physical exercise Relaxation Diet
Friendship	Making New Friends A Good Friend	The changing nature of friendship	Boyfriends and Girlfriends
Relationships and Sexuality	Me as Unique and Different Friendship Changes at Adolescence The Reproductive System Images of Male and Female Respecting myself and others	From conception to birth Recognising and expressing feelings and emotions Peer pressure and other influences Managing relationships Making responsible decisions Health and Personal safety	Body Image Where am I now? Relationships – what's important The three R's: respect, rights and responsibilities Conflict
Emotional Health	Recognising Feelings Respecting My Feelings and the Feelings of Others	Self Confidence Body Image	Stress Feelings and Moods
Influences and Decisions	My Heroes	Positive and negative influences Making decisions	Making a good decision
Substance Use	Why use drugs? Alcohol: the facts Smoking and its effects Smoking: why, why not?	The effects of drugs Alcohol and its effects Alcohol: why, why not? Cannabis and its effects Cannabis: why, why not?	Ecstasy; the realities Heroin: the realities
Personal Safety	Looking after myself	Accidents at home Feeling threatened	Recognising unsafe situations Violence Help agencies

The Dept. of Education and Science recognises that while each school comprehensively addresses the curriculum, they also have flexibility within this framework to plan the SPHE programme most suitable for the students and the school.

SPHE in Senior Cycle

Social, Personal and Health Education is now part of the core curriculum for all students in primary school and at Junior Cycle. In 2003, the NCCA reconvened the SPHE course committee to oversee the development of SPHE in Senior Cycle. The SPHE course committee includes representatives of the different partners in education; the teacher unions, the National Parents' Council, Departments of Health and Education, State Examinations Commission, Joint Managerial Body, Irish Association of Pastoral Care, Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools, Irish Vocational Education Association and the SPHE Support Service. The SPHE course committee is now in the final stages of completing the SPHE curriculum framework for SPHE.

SPHE in Senior Cycle is designed as a

ninety hour course, ideally delivered as a double period over two years in senior cycle. The SPHE draft curriculum framework builds on the students' prior learning experiences in SPHE in primary and Junior Cycle post-primary education. The draft curriculum framework is designed as an enabling curriculum which supports planning at individual school level. There are five areas of learning and associated learning outcomes:

- mental health
- gender studies
- substance use
- relationships and sexuality education
- physical activity and nutrition.

It is envisaged that planning for teaching and learning in SPHE will require that each

area of learning is addressed.

The World Health Organisation is unquestioning of the efficacy of the role of schools in social, personal and health education. It states that 'an effective school health programme can be one of the most cost effective investments a nation can make to simultaneously improve education and health'. (WHO Skills for Health: Document 9)

The development of SPHE in Senior Cycle is being informed by the wider developments in Senior Cycle education. Schools that currently provide, or wish to include, SPHE in Senior Cycle can consult the draft curriculum framework which is available on www.ncca.ie. Details of the proposed wider developments at Senior Cycle are also available on this site.



In-service Training in Dublin



In-service Training in Limerick

Coordinating SPHE

Eileen Byrne SPHE Coordinator,
Ballyhaunis Community School

The inclusion of SPHE as a formal part of the curriculum is a recognition that education is not restricted to the acquisition of a series of academic skills. It is an acknowledgement of the fundamental importance of the journey and development of each individual in a social context which is defined to an extent by the pervasive nature of the world in which we live

Turning out well balanced and well rounded young people is at the core of SPHE. What determines the success of this endeavour is a thorough familiarity with and confidence in the content and the process of the programme by those who seek to deliver it.

An essential pre-requisite for proper implementation of the SPHE programme is the whole-hearted commitment of the teachers involved. It is also imperative that the programme is valued and

supported fully by management. In the context of any school where all the aforementioned applies the role of the SPHE Co-ordinator is relatively straight forward. At basic level the role involves:

- Organising regular meetings of the teachers of each year group
- Programme planning and evaluation
- Contact with RDO for SPHE and other agencies
- Organising access to training

Participation in the teaching of SPHE programme by the Co-ordinator is useful hands-on experience. Of tremendous value to all involved is the continuous in-service training which is provided by the SPHE support service. As Coordinator of SPHE in my school I have found the work very difficult, very challenging but very worthwhile.

FOR HEIDI WITH BLUE HAIR

*When you dyed your hair blue
(or, at least, ultramarine,
for the clipped sides, with a crest
of jet black spikes on top)
you were sent home from school*

*because, as the headmistress put it,
although dyed hair was not
specifically forbidden, yours
was, apart from anything else,
not done in the school colours.*

*Tears in the kitchen, telephone calls
to school from your freedom-loving father:
'She's not a punk in her behaviour;
it's just a style.' (You wiped your eyes,
also not in the school colour.)*

*'She discussed it with me first -
we checked the rules.'
'And anyway, Dad,
it cost twenty-five dollars.
Tell them it won't wash out -
not even if I wanted to try.'*

*It would have been unfair to mention
your mother's death, but that
shimmered behind the arguments.
The school had nothing else against you;
the teachers twittered and gave in.*

*Next day your black friend had hers done
in grey, white and flaxen yellow -
the school colours precisely:
an act of solidarity, a witty
tease. The battle was already won.*

FLEUR ALCOCK

Permission to print applied for

What the SPHE Support Service Offers to Schools

In-Service for SPHE Teachers:	Introduction to SPHE Continuation Modular and Topic days e.g. RSE, Substance Use, Anti-Bullying SPHE Subject Planning and Assessment In-Service for SPHE Coordinators
In-Service for School Staff:	Introduction to SPHE Health Promoting School Anti-Bullying Wellness Staff Self-Esteem SPHE and Whole School Issues in Mental Health SPHE and the Holistic Development of the Student Grief and Loss
In-Service for School Management: (Principals & Deputy Principals)	Critical Incidents Conflict Management Mental Health The Role of SPHE in the Care of the Student Child Protection Guidelines
Policy Development Support:	SPHE/RSE Substance Use Anti-Bullying
In School Support:	SPHE Programme Planning New Teachers Coordinators SPHE and WSE/Subject Inspection Meeting with Principals Help with Resources Assistance with particular areas of the Programme
Other:	Available to Speak to Parent Groups on SPHE Help with Theme Week or Events

SPHE National Office



John Lahiff
National Co-ordinator



Ann Doherty
Administrative Officer

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Health Events Diary for April to December 2007

APRIL

April 7	World Health Day	www.euro.who.int
April 15	National Spring Meeting Diabetes Federation of Ireland	www.diabetes.ie
April 16-20	Skipathon Irish Heart Foundation	www.irisheart.ie

MAY

May 1	World Asthma Day	www.asthma.org.uk
May 10-12	Happy Heart Weekend	www.irisheart.ie
May 19-21	Annual Conference about Mental Health in Ireland	www.mentalhealthireland.ie
May 31	World No-Tobacco Day	www.euro.who.int/tobaccofree

SEPTEMBER

Sept 1	National Epilepsy Conference	www.epilspysy.ie
Sept 10	Breast cancer Awareness Month	www.cancer.ie
Sept 13-15	Daisy Day	www.aware.ie
Sept 13	World Lymphoma Day	www.cancer.ie
Sept 21	World Alzheimer's Day	www.alzheimer.ie
Sept 28	Pink Ribbon Day	www.cancer.ie
Sept 24-30	Irish Heart Week	www.irisheart.ie
Sept 28-Oct 6	Positive Aging Week	www.ageaction.ie

OCTOBER

Oct 1	International Day of Older Persons	www.olderinireland.ie
Oct 1-7	National Breastfeeding Week	www.hse.ie
Oct 1-31	International Walk to School Week	
Oct 8-14	National Arthritis Week	www.arthritisireland.ie
Oct 10	World Mental Health Day	www.wfmh.org
Oct 16	World Food Day	www.fao.org

NOVEMBER

Nov 5	Men's Cancer Action Week	www.cancer.ie
Nov 5-11	Anti-Racism Week in the Workplace	www.equality.ie
Nov 14	World diabetes Day	www.diabetes.ie

DECEMBER

Dec 1	World AIDS Day	www.worldAIDSday.org
Dec 3	International Day of Disabled Persons	www.un.org
Dec 10	International Human Rights Day	www.un.org



Treasa Leahy

Best Wishes

to Treasa, former RDO for South Western Area Health Board who has left to take up the post of Principal of the Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore, Dublin.

Your Feedback is Important!

We welcome feedback from students, parents or members of school staff. If you would like to make a comment, contribution or suggestion, please email them to sphe@mie.ie or post to the National Office in Marino.

