



Evaluating SRE Programme Outcomes

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How does Sexual and Relationship Education (SRE) shape middle school students' knowledge, understanding, attitudes and behavior?

In schools across England, young people consistently report that the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Sexual and Relationship Education (SRE) they receive is inadequate. In our efforts to better understand and evaluate the role that PSHE and SRE may play in building the understanding, skills and dispositions our young people need to lead healthy fulfilling lives, we began this research project by commissioning a literature review.

The literature review, researched and written by internationally recognised, sexuality education specialist, Dr. Elizabeth Shroeder, revealed that SRE has been provided in one form or another in many countries around the world since the early 20th century, with a greater increase seen in the 1970s and beyond. The historical focus on avoiding too-early (or, back then, out-of-wedlock) pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases reverberates into the efforts to provide SRE today, which still focuses heavily on avoiding the possible negative outcomes of shared sexual behaviours.

Even in more socially progressive countries like the United Kingdom, what is being done in SRE today is not

adequate. SRE must begin with foundational knowledge that is built upon as students advance through school. It must be more comprehensive in scope, focusing beyond body parts and changes of puberty.

Improving the quality and positive learner outcomes of our PSHE and SRE provision at ACS International Schools in England currently is an important part of our school development work. PSHE and SRE topics are addressed through Science and PSHE lessons, as well as activities delivered through our advisory programmes in middle and high school.

Like our approaches to teaching and learning across the core curriculum, innovation lies at the heart of our PSHE and SRE curriculum development and delivery. ACS Cobham International School's Middle School division has, for example, pioneered the use of electronic infant simulators. Each year since 2008, more than 100 grade eight students complete the 'Baby Project.' We have chosen and invested in this teaching strategy because research indicates that use of the simulator enhances the learning outcomes associated with lessons aimed at building knowledge about and

promoting responsible sexual behaviours.

As there are no standardised or longitudinal assessments associated with PSHE or SRE, the extent to which the course or the Baby Project provide relevant information that persists into late adolescence and early adulthood is not known. The current delivery of the Baby Project is time intensive and requires the purchase and maintenance of bespoke teaching materials. If the long-term influence of the program is positive, it justifies continuing to include the unit in the Sex and Relationship Education curriculum.

However, if there is no significant long-term influence on the knowledge and understanding that students develop or the extent to which they make informed choices in the future, it would indicate the need to re-evaluate the efficacy of the programme. As a first step to developing a longitudinal data collection plan, this project aims to evaluate the knowledge, understanding, values and attitudes related to PSHE and SRE that are developed through the Grade 8 course activities.

To help assess the effectiveness of the programme, a pre-unit survey was designed to capture baseline data to understand the students' prior knowledge about the content to be covered in the Grade 8 Baby Project. The survey was implemented just prior to the delivery of the unit.

A post-unit survey was also designed, asking the same questions as the pre-unit survey, with the addition of two questions. The post-unit survey was implemented following the completion of the Grade 8 Baby Project.

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The pre-unit survey results showed:

- Many of the students did not remember very much of the SRE curriculum that was taught in the grade 7 PSHE programme or had little prior knowledge from previous educational experiences outside ACS.
- A significant percentage of students did not understand terms that one would assume they would at their age, e.g. contraception.
- More students than expected had a strong understanding of parenting and what a baby needs to thrive.

The results suggest that additional questions are required to find out how long the students have been at ACS, and whether they participated in the grade 7 PSHE programme. Additionally, demographic data about the number of younger and/or older sibling they have is being considered as this could explain why there was a high number of students who had a strong understanding of parenting and babies' needs.

At the time of publication, the analysis of the post-unit survey results had not been completed. As this project was selected to continue for another year, the post-unit survey analysis will be completed in preparation for repeating this data collection exercise in the coming school year.

In addition to the Grade 8 data collection, a new survey will be designed and administered to Grade 9 students, as part of the Grade 9 PSHE programme. The Grade 9 survey will explore the extent to which the knowledge and understanding demonstrated in the Grade 8 post-unit survey persists into Grade 9.

In addition, the survey will ask new questions about how the PSHE and SRE programmes met students' needs and addressed their questions, and ways the programmes can be improved in the future.

For more information about this project, visit:

<http://cim.acs-schools.com/index.php/evaluating-sexual-and-relationship-education-programme-impact/>

Resources:

Sexuality and Relationships Education (SRE) – A Literature Review

<http://cim.acs-schools.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Literature-Review-SRE-Final.pdf>

Pre-unit Survey

http://cim.acs-schools.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/SurveyMonkey_71680200.pdf

Post Unit Surey

<http://cim.acs-schools.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/PostUnitSurveyV2.pdf>

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