Choosing, creating and working with resources to teach SPHE/RSE

Introduction

This material aims to support you in choosing, creating and working with resources to teach SPHE/RSE. The sections are as follows:

- Choosing resources
- Creating your own resources
- Working with resources
- How can I support parents[1]?
- Further reading

Snapshot from research

Resources play an important role in learning experiences. Schools should consider choosing examples that tie in with the aims and objectives of the curriculum and reflect school policies and spirit (NCCA, 1999, p. 33). As part of an overall pedagogical approach, resources can contribute to effective teaching and learning in a positive, inclusive and supportive way. Using a wide variety that reflect the reality and contexts of the lives of the children can support their sense of belonging and feeling of being valued and visible in learning experiences. Your school's SPHE and RSE policy should outline resources that have been selected for use.

Choosing resources

The following questions may be useful when choosing resources:

- Are they relevant to your context and class? Consider resources that are particularly relevant to the different topics and issues in SPHE/RSE, including the objectives of the curriculum, the age and stage of the children, as well as how the resource connects with the lives of the children in your class.

- Are they accurate and do they relate to the age/stage of the curriculum? The information presented in the resources should reflect the intended learning of the curriculum as well as being accurate.

- Do they meet the needs of different types of learners?

- Do they promote active learning? You might consider how well a resource provides opportunities for active learning, the key methodology for teaching SPHE/RSE.

- Consider the knowledge and skills needed by children to engage in using the resource and ensure that its use provides an appropriate level of challenge and engagement.

- Are they inclusive of the backgrounds and beliefs of different families? You might consider how well the resource represents the children and the range of identities in your class but also the wider school and local community.

- Are resources which will be shared with parents, available in the home language of the family? While this may not always be possible, some resources are available in different languages.

- Are they free of bias and stereotypes?

- Be critical when purchasing commercial resources. Are they of high quality, inclusive and in keeping with the school's SPHE/RSE policy? Have they been made by a reputable organisation? Are there any hidden messages in the resource?

[1] Parents refers to mothers, fathers and those with parental responsibility in different parenting relationships. This may include foster parents, adoptive parents, step-parents, legal guardians, and carers.

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Teacher reflection
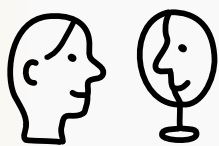
- When reflecting on some of the resources you have chosen to teach SPHE/RSE, what considerations were most important to you and why?

- How do you assess if a resource is of good quality or not?

- In considering the variety of ways they can be used, what ways have you used resources to teach SPHE/RSE, and what worked well?

- Have you consulted school management where necessary, or the school's policy and approved list of programmes / resources?

Teacher Snapshot

I find in the early years of primary you need to consider the variety of toys you have in your class and in particular your home corner. I noticed when some children were playing in my home corner that they were unsure what to do with some of the common food packets I had brought in from my own home. When I asked the children to bring in some of their own empty food containers, they were far more comfortable in using what they knew in their play. When I realised this, I tried to ensure that the home corner represented different types of homes and cultures. For example, this meant including dolls with different colour skin and a variety of fabrics and visual stimulus that represented more than my own idea of home. I find the children are far more confident in their play and how they talk to me about what they are doing, when they see themselves and their home lives represented in the resources I have in the classroom.

Creating your own resources

While there is a wide variety of resource material available to teach SPHE/RSE, at times you may need to create your own resources to meet the needs of the children in your class. Or, it may be possible to adapt existing resources. Below are some examples of resources you could create to support teaching.

- **Concrete resources:** Creating or sourcing concrete resources that require children to handle, manipulate or test can be an important way to meet their needs and contribute to an active learning approach in your class. In SPHE/RSE this approach can be used in older classes, for example when looking at hygiene products.

- **Posters and diagrams:** Often visuals are supportive for teaching aspects of SPHE/RSE and can provide a focal point for talk and discussion. Commercially produced posters and diagrams may not provide you with the same ability to differentiate or adapt the resource for the age/stage of the children in your class.

- **Digital technologies:** The use of digital technologies as a resource can support teaching and learning in SPHE/RSE. Sometimes a presentation can form the basis for talk and discussion. At other times, using digital technology tools for responding, such as taking photographs, making sound recordings or videos of learning, can support active learning.

- **Displays:** Consider your displays as a visual resource in your class. Ensure that children feel visible and represented in displays. Whether showing their work or adding posters/visuals, ensure that they are inclusive of the backgrounds and skin colour of the children.

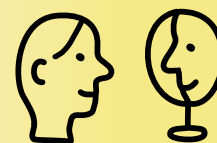# Choosing, creating and working with resources to teach SPHE/RSE

Working with resources

You might consider some of the following suggestions when using resource materials to teach SPHE/RSE.

- Consider how resources can be adapted to be inclusive of the children in your class. For example, you could
  - amend names of characters in lessons/story to better reflect the school community,
  - supplement/substitute images with more inclusive ones,
  - plan different follow-up activities that might better suit your class.

- Incorporate resources into your teaching that reflect the families and cultural backgrounds of the children in your class. Often picture books are the best resource to achieve this as well as printing visuals that represent the diversity in your class, for display or talk and discussion.

- Amend or supplement the resource as necessary to support children with special educational needs (SEN). It is important to think about providing materials, including concrete materials and visual aids, that offer multi-sensory experiences to children. Consider that some children with SEN may need individualised resources that meet their interests and aptitudes and can support their motivation and engagement. Be cognisant of using resources from lower class levels/ages for children with SEN and ensure that visuals, concepts and language are appropriate. If necessary, differentiate to ensure the engagement and motivation for learning is maintained.

- Amend or supplement the resource as necessary to support EAL learners. Consider how you make connections with children's home language and culture so they can make meaningful links and connections.

- The curriculum is drawn up in a spiral manner. Considering the time and effort that goes into creating resources and the cost of purchasing some resources, it is worth ensuring that a resource can be used to meet multiple curriculum objectives and support its spiral nature. It is also worth considering whether the resource could be used across other areas of the curriculum for integration and when planning thematically.

- Regularly communicate with parents about the resources and programmes that you use to teach SPHE/RSE. Agreed programmes and resources should be named in the school's SPHE/RSE policy, for example if the school is using the 'Busy Bodies' resources or the 'Walk Tall' programme this should be named.
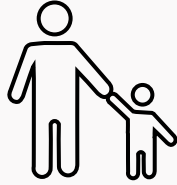
Teacher reflection

- Are there any barriers to choosing resources that include the considerations outlined above?

- Does your school's SPHE/RSE policy outline the resources that are approved for use in your school?

- Is there an opportunity to regularly review and update the agreed resources in your SPHE/RSE policy?

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What's Next?

How can I support parents?

Home learning: You might consider letting children take some resources related to SPHE/RSE home to support engagement with parents. This might be visuals, games, or books.

Communications: Sometimes it can be difficult for parents to conceptualise how SPHE/RSE is taught and sharing links or examples of resources used can support them in understanding.

Further reading

pp. 31-33 and p.103 of the NCCA (1999), **SPHE Teacher Guidelines**, Department of Education and Skills, Dublin.

Busy Bodies - A booklet about puberty and adolescence for you and your parents

References

NCCA (1999), *Social, Personal and Health Education*, Department of Education and Skills, Dublin.

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