

A critique of the “All That I Am” programme for schools

This critique mainly relates to the junior school material, though the KS3&4 material has been reviewed and is referred to below.

(THESE PRINCIPLES CAN BE APPLIED TO ANY SEX-ED PROGRAMME)

Introduction

- 1 It is extremely clear in the teaching of the Catholic Church that the prime educators of children on these matters are parents. There is a lot of evidence that shows that this position is valid and is by far the best way to provide effective values education for children. (BMJ research 19/1/07). Programmes which talk about sex and condoms have either no effect or (according to the literature) make things worse. Children almost always express a preference for their parents to explain these things to them. Outcomes are much more favourable among those for whom their parents are the main sources of information about sexual matters.
- 2 The proposed school program, as well as the diocesan policy usurps the role of parents by failing to involve them in the process of education. The process merely informs them and does not promote or support the role of parents in delivering this. The proposed school programme is therefore against Catholic teaching.
- 3 Where parents are not involved in the delivery of the programme, teachers may depart from the material approved and add inappropriate material. We know of a child in year 5 who was told by a school nurse “you don’t need a daddy to have children. For a few hundred pounds you can get a baby by a visit to a laboratory.” (Details of artificial insemination followed.)
- 4 Even the letter to parents, sent home openly with the children, has produced a mushrooming of playground talk on sexual matters. The latency stage of a child of 5 to puberty should be respected. Sadly, there are children who are prematurely sexually aware, for whatever reason, but it will be detrimental to the innocence of the majority if they are encouraged to share their knowledge.

With regard to the currently proposed program, “All That I Am”

- 1 While this program is less visually pornographic than alternatives, we still cannot condone something which is less corrupting.
- 2 Parts of the program which equate the bits on washing to being rejected because of smell etc to year 5 children are not necessary but also encourages feelings of inadequacy to those who are less than perfect. See DVD.
- 3 Discussion of periods is appropriate for girls, with their mothers but not in mixed sex classes. Boys should not be troubled with this in Y5. See Teaching Strategies p13
- 4 Boys and girls should not feel it is appropriate to have open disclosure of these issues and the programme clearly promotes this; this is culturally out of step and is inappropriate behaviour in our society, even for adults. CCC2522
- 5 “God does not want to hold us back from full self expression” (teachers manual year 6, p38) is an incorrect sentiment. He most certainly does want us to hold back from many ways in which we can express ourselves, primarily those ways which are sinful and which harm others and ourselves.
- 6 Y5 video and 09.30 has an inappropriate discussion of periods and presentation of female reproductive system in graphic form (needs justifying that this is necessary, or helpfully formative given lack of similar detail to anatomy of other systems at this Key Stage) and naked female form. The showing of naked adult forms and reproductive

- tracts in class falsely legitimises the sort of pornographic viewing on the Internet to which boys are particularly at risk.
- 7 In the Yr 5 "handbook" it says that "The onset of physical and emotional changes, such that is experienced in pre-adolescence and puberty, now require children to get information from sources, other than their parents." This anecdotal comment is also often made by government teenage sexual health units with no scientific reference to back it up.
 - 8 Y6;- specific questions as to whom the child trust can introduce doubts and division into a parental relationship;- a study has shown that if the school introduces sex ed before the parents the children will go to the person who introduced them to the subject. (Who will be there in the future?)
 - 9 Y6 key vocabulary = testicles! Also Ejaculate. We do not agree that this is key vocabulary for understanding human relationships in year 6.
 - 10 We think this is the wrong program for the promotion of values;- How do I take care of myself (Y6 resource sheet 7) in these sheets we find no mention of sin, or values or keeping safe from moral danger etc, respect for others only cleanliness etc. The discussion of positive values like self-control, generosity, purity, good friendships, modesty are lacking.
 - 11 Discussion of "wet dreams" should not be done in groups. Many parents at our schools feel it should be done individually, privately, probably not at year six (and definitely not with girls). (See CCC;2522 Modesty is decency. It keeps silence or reserve where there is evident risk of unhealthy curiosity. It is discreet.)
 - 12 There is almost nothing in the Y5 and Y6 curricula about marriage, self-control, chastity and stable relationships.
 - 13 This is not a programme that builds on a child's understanding or natural interest in procreation, the approach recommended by TMHS. Adults can interpret a child's interest with their own adult understanding and thus impose on the child information the child had not sought.
 - 14 This programme should be seen as a whole (we have viewed the material up to year 11 with a group of parents and a priest); it is highly sexual, introduces all areas of sex and related matters, to children at different stages of maturity. Discussion in pairs and as groups is a key part of the teaching strategy. The subject matter presented is often beyond the maturity, intellectual and moral formation of the pupils it is aimed at. It is disingenuous to publicly open up sexual behaviour, before the children are ready for it, and before it is approved, even in our society. Contrast this with the way smoking and alcohol are presented.
 - 15 The KS1&2 material must be seen along with the KS3&4 to allow one to be fully concerned about the whole programme. The producers quote an otherwise largely obscure psychologist whose quoted piece was published after the pilot visual material of the programme was made. He states 'Can we envisage 9 and 10 year old girls mature enough to start their sexual careers?' J Coleman. Like other such material in the teachers' notes, this appears twice in the teachers' notes for KS3 and KS4.
 - 16 There are scientific errors in the KS1&2 materials and also in KS3&4.

Therefore we maintain the God given right of parents to be the prime educators of their children in this matter, and insist that the school withdraw this education from our children, allowing us to take responsibility for this aspect of their education.

If the school insists on providing this, parents must be written to and given the opportunity of being present during the class when it is presented. (Church teaching TMHS ref..)

Rights of parents (Church given)

1. To be the prime educators of children in matters of human love and sexuality (Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality=TMHS)
2. To be the protectors of their children (Mit Brendenner Sorge)
3. To know what is to be offered in terms of teaching and material (THMS)
4. To withdraw their children whenever they feel that the education is inappropriate or they wish to do it at another time or otherwise
5. Sex education must always be carried out under the attentive guidance of parents (Familiaris Consortio)
6. No society or school should institutionalise parent's non involvement (THMS)

Finally, some biological howlers from the "All That I Am" program:

- 1 People normally do not produce 2 litres of sweat per day. 2 litres is the total daily fluid requirement for such people. Sweat is a tiny proportion of this. If we did use that much fluid, there certainly would be a need for all the body products primary school children can get hold of.
- 2 Condoms properly used are 98% effective. This is a deception. Condoms used by teenagers lead to pregnancy in 15- 30% of users. Stating they are 98% effective merely misleads teenagers into a false trust and a trap.
- 3 Although there is not a discussion of the use of condoms to prevent HIV and other STIs it is again the case that having described them as 98% effective there is a huge missed opportunity here. In fact condoms only reduce infection rates for HIV by 60-80%. The reduction in infectivity of Human Papilloma Virus (the cause of Cancer of the Cervix) by condoms is close to 0%. Similarly the epidemic infection of teenage children (Chlamydia which lead to pain and adult infertility) is only partially prevented by the use of condoms. That condoms are merely presented as highly effective, is a dangerous falsehood and a missed opportunity to promote chastity.

In Summary:

- It is a highly sexualised programme, and this becomes more obvious in KS3&4.
- It usurps parents in more trivial areas such as washing but more importantly in more sensitive areas.
- It is out of step with the maturity of the children and does not approach it from their own inbuilt wonder (cf TMHS)
- In ways alluded to above it undermines the children's modesty.
- Teachers at the school are to be congratulated for having withdrawn it last term.

Resources for parents to use at home with children at KS1 and KS2

These are the ones we have had time so far to order and view but there are others available from Family Publications and elsewhere

We would be happy to do an evening presentation of the materials available for parents and would trawl the publishing companies for further material.

'**Angel in the Waters**' 1-800-888-9344 (Family Publications)

'**Human Life: the first Wonder**', (Family Publications) Excellent and educational.

'**The Princess and the Kiss**', by Jennie Bishop (a story of God's gift of Purity), ISBN 0871628686. I think Jennie Bishop wrote a follow-up.

There is a rhyming one which all our junior school children enjoy '**There's a House inside my Mummy**', which is fun, colourful and tender (WALKER picture books ISBN 1-84121-068-4).

The Joyful Mysteries of life' Catherine and Bernard Scherrer (Family Publications) which is a good resource for parents to decant from (but we wouldn't say read directly with their children.) Obviously children can ask questions from any age. The general advice from the better sources seems to be to answer truthfully but in generalized way with no more detail than is necessary to satisfy the child, being aware that an adult may have an interpretation which is irrelevant to a young child's question. For example! "Where did I came from?", Daddy may take a deep breath and start explaining. When Daddy stops to draw breath, child interjects "Harry in my class says he came from Queen Mary's Hospital", or, " I said from Jesus, but Amelia said from God."

'St Maria Goretti, a Catholic Colouring book', 'Modern Saints and their Faces' which includes the stories of St Maria Goretti, St Laura Vicuna (who was murdered by her mother's 'paramour' after not succumbing to his advances, and eventually her mother returned to the Faith) and St Dominic Savio; finally 'The Saints and our children', the last book has a series of saint's stories which emphasise different virtues. Personally, I think the important thing at this stage is to encourage the children to pray for the gift of purity.

The **'FORMATION IN CHRISTIAN CHASTITY' PROGRAMME** from Harrisburg is very good, though as far as I can see it has black and white printed sheets one can print off so it lacks the visual aesthetics of some of the books I have mentioned. It is Catholic, but also much more thoughtful in its whole approach than the very limited sex-ed programmes which have the usual mantras and aims and lack sensitivity. http://www.hbgdiocese.org/education_index.htm [NOTE: Click on the 'Religious Education' button then scroll down and click on the 'FORMATION IN CHRISTIAN CHASTITY PROGRAM' link.

The **Catechism of the Catholic Church** has clear quotations on various issue and there are some great sermons from American bishops one can use with OLDER children to explain the Church's teaching on various pressure areas, but that is just for note.

A final thought for the parents, teachers and governors: Having ploughed through the whole curriculum we saw this on an email that for us restored a clear understanding of these issues, which the programme lacks.

Marriage, in fact, the foundation of the family, is not a 'way of living sexuality as a couple.' If it were only this, it would be just one of many possible ways. Nor is it simply the expression of a sentimental love between two persons: this characteristic is usually present in every loving friendship. Marriage is more than that: it is a union between a man and a woman, precisely as such, and in the totality of their male and female essence. This union can only be established through an act of the partners' free will, but its specific content is determined by the structure of the human being, the woman and the man: mutual self-giving and the transmission of life. Such self-giving, in the whole complementary dimension of a woman and a man, together with the willingness to owe oneself in justice to the other, is called conjugality, and the partners in this way become spouses: 'This conjugal communion sinks its roots in the natural complementarity that exists between man and woman, and is nurtured through the personal willingness of the spouses to share their entire life project, what they have and what they are: for this reason such communion is the fruit and the sign of a profoundly human need' (Familiaris Consortio 19).