

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

Professional Development Bursary - Report

Mrs Stella McKittrick, assistant Home Economics and Health and Social Care Teacher, Collegiate Grammar School, Enniskillen

On 22.02.06 I applied for a Professional Development Bursary from the General Teaching Council for N.I. Since I have been asked to deliver an A2 compulsory Unit in Health and Social Care entitled "Promoting Health and Wellbeing" next term I decided to apply for the bursary to allow me to develop my own knowledge and skills within this area.

I was successful in my application and was awarded the sum of £639. This was used for substitute cover and travel expenses which enabled me to arrange three days "work shadowing" with the Health Promotion Unit (Westcare) based in Londonderry.

The Assistant Health Promotion Manager, Mrs Sandra Semple, very kindly organised three days of activities with a view to providing me with an overview of the work carried out by the Health Promotion Department.

Throughout the three days I met with nine Health Promotion Officers who have responsibilities in different areas e.g. Physical Activity, Sexual Health, Mental Health. These meetings were invaluable as many of the Health Promotion Officers were able to advise me on the delivery of the Unit concerned and also offered their help and advice if needed in the future. I was also fortunate enough to attend a "Child Safety Awareness" day which took place in the Bawnacre Centre, Irvinestown. I feel that these opportunities will most definitely help to enhance my delivery of this Unit. Another opportunity provided was to visit and register with the Resources and Graphics Centre at the Health Promotion Unit where I obtained some very useful references which will aid my delivery of some of the Unit content, as well as many other resources which could hopefully be used to make my delivery more interesting and varied for the pupils.

I was particularly interested to meet Marie Dunne who is the Health Promotion Officer for Mental Health at Westcare. Together we attended a Consultation on the "N.I. Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2006-2011". The Strategic Aim of this Strategy is "to reduce the N.I. suicide rate, particularly among young people and those most at risk".

It was stressed at the consultation that the onus should be on all of us to deliver the Strategy's key aims and that "Education" certainly has a large part to play.

Marie is very interested in the setting up of "Health and Wellbeing Groups" within schools, for the benefit of both staff and pupils, and she offered her services to the school at which I work if necessary. I feel that this would certainly be beneficial in nurturing a more holistic view of health within schools and I have already discussed this with my Principal, Miss Elizabeth Armstrong.

Undoubtedly the experiences, skills and knowledge gained throughout the three days of work shadowing will help to make my delivery of Unit 8 more thorough and interesting as well as being of benefit in my pastoral role as a form teacher. I hope to evaluate my delivery of the Unit throughout the year by employing a mixture of self-evaluation and pupil evaluation. Since a large part of the Unit is concerned with the pupils carrying out a Health Promotion Activity, the success of this venture will also be a useful evaluation tool.

I hope to share the experiences gained through providing each member of staff with a written report and by making myself available for discussion to any interested department as required.

This activity most certainly enhanced my own development as a teacher through having had the opportunity to observe a cross-section of the work carried out by a Health Promotion Department. It was also beneficial as I was able to make some very useful contacts within Health Promotion and I feel that I now have a better understanding of the content of the Unit which I will be delivering next term. Through my experiences I hope that I will be able to make my delivery of the material more relevant to the work situation for the pupils involved. I intend to further my knowledge within this area and I have been asked to take part in a pilot "Introduction to Health Promotion" course in the Autumn Term.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the GTCNI for providing me with the opportunity to develop my skills within the area of Health Promotion and I hope to build on this knowledge base throughout the delivery of the Unit in the next school year.