Level 5 Health and Physical Education - Do it the Ian Way

PEEL in Practice: 1300 ideas for quality teaching
Sandra Kuczerhan, Eumemmerring Secondary College

My year 7 Skills for Living Class was involved in the process of thinking through problems and making decisions. I was keen for the students to be able to link actions with consequences, to base their comments on careful consideration of a specific problem, and to share their ideas and opinions with others.

The resource material, "The Senses" from Feel, Value, Act by L. Brady, readily gained student interest. Initial questions dealt with basic concerns about Ian's age and whether or not his toy was a birthday present. (See excerpt which follows).

We then moved on to student questions. Still seated in our circle, students raised their hands and offered their questions which were listed on the blackboard. (I learned from this experience that I should have had a class scribe as I had to stay behind at lunchtime to record the questions and names of students who had posed them.)

The next lesson revolved around the question sheet. Students were delighted to see their own questions rather than the usual teacher's comprehension sheet. I was also happy with the range of questions which covered my agenda AND opened the discussion to wider students' interests, such as bullying. Discussion was lively and even the quieter members of the circle were eager to "own" their own question and address them.

I was surprised to see that the questions dealt with practical issues (which I would have ignored) such as the cost of a hearing aid; knowledge-seeking questions based on personal interests, such as "Can you catch deafness?" and questions which showed empathy, such as those dealing with sign language.

Evidence that students were listening to each other and learning from each other was clear from the clumping of questions where one student followed the lead or interest of previous speakers. For example, questions one, two and three on hearing aids, questions nine, ten and eleven on possible solutions and so on. When a student changed the direction of questions, such as question fifteen after question twelve, thirteen and fourteen, other students were keen to pick up the change and run with it until the topic was exhausted or another change of direction was initiated.

It was also interesting to see changes in perception or opinion as individual students answered or dealt with topics/questions, and tried to convince others of their points of view. Students supported an idea or refuted it, stating their reasons and often building upon comments already offered.

The final lesson dealt with the questions:

1. What should Vanessa do?
2. If the teacher knew what really happened, what do you think she should do?
3. Is Ian to blame in any way? Why/why not?
4. What should Ian do?
Students wrote their answers as a basis for the next round of discussion.

Students commented favourably on this learning experience and each time I handed out a resource sheet I was beset with requests to "Do it the Ian way".

THE STUDENTS' QUESTIONS

1. What does a hearing aid cost?
2. Why didn't Ian's mother buy him a hearing aid?
3. If your parents couldn't afford a hearing aid and you needed one, would Medicare buy it for you?
4. Why did Ian's parents allow him to bring his best toy to school?
5. Why do some people have birthdays and other people have saints' days?
6. Why didn't the teachers notice that some kids were playing tricks on Ian?
7. Why didn't the teachers talk to the class about how to treat kids who are different?
8. Why did the teacher accept what the bully said and make so little effort to get the truth?
9. Shouldn't Ian be getting help from a counselor?
10. Shouldn't Ian be learning to read lips?
11. Couldn't the class be taught sign language to help them understand Ian's problems?
12. Why don't the girls mind their own business?
13. Why doesn't Ian stop being such a wimp?
14. Why don't the other kids gang up on Jonathan and bash him after school?
15. Why do people laugh at other people's problems?
16. When will they find a cure for deafness?
17. Is being deaf a disease you can catch?
18. Are deaf people allowed to drive cars?
19. If a deaf person drove a car, how would he know when someone was honking him or sirens were going?
20. Is it true that deaf people can feel music vibrations and dance to the beat?
21. Is it true that deaf people can't speak properly?
22. What made Ian deaf in the first place?

The Senses: Feel, Value, Act by L Brady

At Vanessa's school there is a small class for children who have learning problems. In that class there are some children who do not hear well.

A boy who lives in the same street as Vanessa is in that class. He is not really deaf, but he misses a lot of what is said in a normal lesson. For this reason he can't keep up with the other children. His name is Ian.

Several months ago, Vanessa noticed that some of the other children were playing tricks on Ian. They weren't talking about his hearing problem in front of him but they were taking advantage of his problem.

For instance, once in the playground a bully had taken Ian's tennis ball. When a teacher asked him why he had it he simply said, "Ian said I could have it, sir!" Ian
couldn't hear what the bully said, so he didn't say anything. No-one could prove that
the bully was lying but everyone knew the truth.

Ian was so embarrassed about his hearing he'd sometimes pretend that he had heard.
He'd nod his head as if he was agreeing when he hadn't heard at all.

And some boys made this into a joke. Jonathan was one such boy. "Cats can fly, can't
they?" he'd ask Ian when he had a group of children around him. "Yes," Ian would
say, nodding his head. Some children would laugh. Others didn't think it was funny at
all. Vanessa certainly didn't.

One day Ian had a train which ran on batteries. It was the best toy he'd ever owned.
He was showing it to a group of children when Jonathan came along.

"What a great looking train," he said. "Can I have a look, Ian?" He took the train and
began to study it closely. Just then the bell rang.

"Can I have the train?" Jonathan asked softly.

Ian didn't hear, but he nodded and said yes pretending that he was agreeing with
Jonathan.

Vanessa saw Jonathan smile. It was just what he wanted. He turned and disappeared
into the school building with Ian's train.

Ian looked hurt and shocked. It was too late to call out. Jonathan was gone. He
understood now what the question was and he'd said yes. So he couldn't say Jonathan
had stolen his train.

Vanessa was full of hate for Jonathan. He had played a really mean trick. She
wondered what she should do. She would have to admit that Ian said yes when
Jonathan asked for the train. That would make the whole thing sound like a
misunderstanding. Anyway, Ian wouldn't want a fuss to be made. That would only
draw attention to his problem.

It seemed that Jonathan could not get into trouble. He must be laughing his head off,
Vanessa thought.

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