

LLADAT

Pedagogical Tips

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The LLADAT Programmes (LLADAT afterschool programme and the Cannabis Education Resource) are designed and developed to be flexible and adaptable in all classrooms; the approach is to keep sessions interactive, with lots of different pedagogical approaches, where the **teacher is primarily the facilitator** of pupil learning. The following offers some tips for teaching and learning within the sessions:

Group Discussion

Where possible try to accommodate group discussion; arrange the chairs in a circle with pupils side by side. Be prepared and have a format for the discussion (beginning, middle and an end). It is important also that you as the teacher **join in** and become part of the circle, part of the group. Make sure to “de-role” pupils if they engaged in role-play.

Group work and Cooperative learning

As many of the lessons in **#CannabisUnplugged** involve students working in groups the advantages of cooperative learning in groups may be worth remembering. Cooperative group learning serves all the Key Skills of the New Framework for Junior Cycle. Research evidence also points to higher achievement, increased retention, greater use of higher level reasoning, better attitudes to school and teachers, higher self-esteem and greater social supports as emergent from cooperative group learning. Cooperative learning supports more positive psychological adjustment, more on-task behaviour, increased perspective taking, greater intrinsic motivation and more positive heterogeneous relationships.

The basic elements of cooperative learning are positive interdependence and interaction, individual and group accountability, enhanced interpersonal and group skills and group processing. These are intrinsically linked to the learning activities in every lesson in **#CannabisUnplugged**, and to the development of a positive construction of learning around cannabis use and misuse.

To support cooperative group learning teachers can structure work so that students need each other to complete their task, through for example:

- shared resources – one set of materials per group (one worksheet between pairs)
- allocation of leadership roles (some of the following may be useful: recorder, researcher, timekeeper, clarifier, reader, folder manager, checker, turn taking etc.)
- shared goals for the group

A class culture of encouragement is taught, as well as modelled by teacher and students to sustain their group learning.

Skills such as listening, trust building, disagreeing, assertive communication are explicitly taught as part of the SPHE programme and are directly relevant to the group learning activities in this resource.

Groups will benefit from time for evaluating their own performance and learning. Feedback should always be positive. Competition is only in terms of enhancing their group's own performance.

Asking Questions

As facilitator of the sessions it is important that you ask pupils questions about their thought, opinions etc. Asking questions gets the pupils to clarify their response, but also allows you to check in with their level of understanding; it also encourages other pupils in the classroom to ask questions if they do not understand. Be sure to allow time for pupils to think before they answer.

Silence

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, it might be a good idea to let silence ensue. Don't fret if there is a silent interval, allow it to develop, it does not necessarily mean that the learning has stopped in fact it may mean the opposite, that pupils are deep in thought or reflection re same.

Facilitate

Facilitate the discussion of the group, ask questions, make questions go further to enhance pupil learning. It is not the purpose of these sessions to decide who is right or wrong but instead it is about giving pupils the opportunity to "explore the question of substance use in society" (NCCA 2010).

Sensitivity

PLEASE BE MINDFUL !!! This may be a difficult topic for some as issues of cannabis use or indeed mental health may occur in the home or indeed the extended family. Care must be taken when discussing such sensitive issues. One must take into consideration that some parents or older adults within the home may openly use cannabis with the home, so care must be taken not to **scare or fear**..

Involving the family

As mentioned, earlier while not compulsory it might be nice to mention the programme to family (parents/guardians) in the home and to inform them the material that will be covered. Not only is this good practice, but it might aid further discussion in the home and if the pupil is researching on the internet the parent/guardian need not

be frightened but instead may use the opportunity to talk about substance use within the home.

We would strongly recommend that parents are made aware and materials shared where appropriate.

Schools and teachers are also encouraged to consider delivery of the “Lets Learn about Drugs and Alcohol Together” (LLADAT) afterschool programme as part of their SPHE Junior Cycle curriculum. The programme is delivered afterschool by MWRDAF / HSE staff and is useful for developing links between home and school around substance use. For more information, please see www.lladat.ie