SCHOOL PROGRAMS 9110

(1987)

Schools offer great opportunity and potential for stimulating interest in wildfire prevention. The classroom atmosphere makes an ideal place to acquaint children with fire prevention responsibility. Here it is possible to form fire- safe attitudes in children. Programs should be developed for all grades, and the program or student audience should not have precise limits: fire prevention knowledge should be made available to any level of any student whenever and wherever benefits can be anticipated.

Attempts should be made to encourage all children to form positive fire prevention attitudes.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS 9110.1

(1987)

Special problems will arise occasionally in a local area or within an identifiable group. In such circumstances, intensive, additional effort should be focused upon these children. Children are naturally inclined to have high standards and will respond to frank talk if persuasive elements relate to them and their interests. Show them facts, dangers, and consequences. They will be influenced by factors of human effort, time, and creativity and not by costs or dollar damage of fires. Attempts at coercion, force, or threat will probably be unsuccessful--at least in talking stages. They must be helped to see the consequences of their actions and to accept personal responsibility if a change in their behavior is to result. For example, several fires may occur in a local area caused by children playing with fire. One approach would be to identify the age group and school area so that classroom programs could be given to these children.

Just as fire prevention representatives need special techniques to teach, teachers need training if they are to educate in fire prevention. Teachers' training courses, formal or informal, can be developed locally and on broader levels through seminars, associations, etc.

PROGRAM PLANNING 9110.2

(1987)

Special interests of the various grade levels should be recognized in planning each program. The type of training and choice of teaching methods should be guided by student levels and interests. Local fire problems, teaching resources, and available classroom facilities should be considered. Possible approaches include classroom visits, assembly programs, corridor or showcase displays, fire prevention projects, field trips, local teaching units, and career opportunity fairs.

Teachers and school administrators support fire safety training, although heavy demands are imposed upon schools on behalf of other special interest subjects. The state Education Code not only provides legal support for fire prevention education but also prescribes instructional areas. It imposes enforcement responsibilities upon local governing boards.

Planning should begin early enough to allow adequate advance time to arrange and develop the program and provide for required materials. Finally, the completed schedule should be coordinated with everyone involved to confirm details and provide for any last-minute adjustments.

PROGRAM PREPARATION 9110.3

(1987)

In preparing the topic for presentation at a school, you should keep in mind that your prime job is to get your message to the students. You may not have the skills of the teacher, but you have the advantage of being a professional speaking as an authority on an element of fire.

You should prepare yourself by arranging the order of your topics and knowing what you want to say about each one. Limit your expressions and words to the age and knowledge level of the students. Children enjoy technical words if too many are not used. They must be carefully and simply explained. Try to illustrate or demonstrate to reinforce your words and actions. Learning is best achieved by engaging all five senses. The more senses you involve, the more effective your teaching will be. Remember that students retain less of what they hear, see, and say than what they do.

Use classroom-teaching materials that are designed to give feedback. Develop those that elicit participation and include materials reinforcement. Stimulate students by involving them. Include contests, games, and interaction among class members if appropriate.

The department and other sources have audio/visual programs on file that can be selected from catalog lists. Visual aids can be developed or improvised. Actual events can be acted out, equipment demonstrated, or fire causes illustrated. Wall charts, posters, tables, and animated displays that are easily prepared can be displayed to prolong your impact.

PROGRAM PRESENTATION 9110.4

(1987)

When you arrive to present your program, you should be prepared physically. Your uniform and appearance should be neat, clean and groomed. Your beginning should serve to create interest. Once this is developed, you should begin your message, carrying student attention as you go. Develop the content from the familiar to the unfamiliar.

You should be aware that young children have short attention spans. Other factors can reduce children's attention, including a full stomach, a warm room, lateness in the school day, large meaningless words, a voice too soft, or a dull lecture.

Watch for feedback from the class to make sure you are communicating. Recognize visual signs of understanding. Watch their eyes. Observe the nodding agreement of heads. Be alert for frowns or other signs of puzzlement. Check with periodic questioning to make sure they understand you. You can help yourself by using meaningful gestures. Proper pacing, voice level, and careful enunciation are necessary.

When you have covered your planned text or have reached the group's attention limit, check with the class to see how well you have taught. This can be done by questioning or by asking for comments or questions from the group. The questions you ask should be open-ended to encourage detailed response and discussion. Encourage children to express their own impressions and ideas about the subject. Evaluate your teaching in regard to their ability to discuss your main concepts.

POST PROGRAM 9110.5

(1987)

After the program is over, you may want to obtain feedback from the classroom teacher. Use any constructive comments to improve your presentation. Leave some material for teacher follow-up. Provide the teacher with a simple outline of the program that he/she can use to prepare lessons for review.

If you are to return, let the teacher know what subjects you will cover so he/she can prepare the class in advance. Teachers are taught little of fire prevention in college. The knowledge they acquire is often based only on their own efforts in special class projects or prescribed conservation units. In other instances, teachers gain basic information by allowing a CDF fire prevention program to be given to a class or by accepting material provided by a firefighting agency.

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