

Notes from SACRE conference Held at The Board of Deputies (BoD) on Sunday 25th April 2010 12noon- 4pm

The afternoon started with welcomes from Hannah Ashleigh & Sandra Teacher and introductions from everybody as the number new of Jewish Representatives on SACRE has grown (thanks to support from BoD)

Speaker: Bruce Gill (Vice Chair, NASACRE) – “SACRE members and SACRE effectiveness”

Bruce explained about his background [he was born in originated in Borrowash!], his career was originally as an English teacher who was asked to additionally teach RE, and then as an inspector and working in Equality and Diversity teams in places such as Lambeth, where he was involved in setting up their SACRE. For many years his SACRE involvement was on Group D (Local Authorities) and he is now on Group B (Church of England) of Southwark SACRE, despite belonging to a United Reform Church and not a CofE Church, but for years the two denominations have shared parish duties and facilities.

Bruce facilitated a session on how representatives can best contribute to the effectiveness of their SACRE. In small groups, we looked at a range of statements as to what makes for an effective SACRE, and groups fed back those statements with which they most and least identified. Issues brought up by the groups included whether SACREs should be advisory or hands-on, strategic or operational, pro-active or passive. We highlighted a commitment to making RE exciting, to ensuring representation from a range of faiths and the importance of inclusivity and the promotion of community cohesion. (Copy of statements considered are attached)

Problems that were discussed included being inquorate on one or more committees, the lack of specialist RE teachers, and the varying ways that effectiveness is linked to funding or a lack thereof (e.g. LAs losing their RE advisors, clerks and specialist inspectors).

We were then given a preview of a new NASACRE resource; a CD-Rom entitled “Effective SACREs.” This will be launched officially at the NASACRE AGM in May. It will be available at a small cost to all SACREs, the BoD will look into purchasing a copy for each of the Jewish Reps and we made the suggestion that it be made available as a website.

Update on National RE Policy

Sandra and Hannah gave an update on recent and ongoing initiatives in the world of RE, which included the following topics:

→ Religious Education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010

→ Warwick research on materials to teach world religions

→ REsilience project – building confidence to handle contentious issues in RE; Learn more at www.RE-silience.org.uk N

B 700 secondary schools can apply to this to receive mentors they will only take 700 and applications are taken from June 2010 BUT you can pre-register now

CHALLENGE –can Derby City have any 2ndry schools accepted onto the scheme?

→ New CPD Handbook (website) for RE teachers – coming soon

→ National Celebration of Religious Education – March 2011

CHALLENGE –can Derby City get involved with local emphasis?

For more information and links to websites relating to these issues, please see the PowerPoint presentation attached to these notes.

Group Discussion – issues from your area

The following topics were raised by individual delegates to the group as a whole and we then worked together to try to find solutions. Where possible, we have indicated the person who first raised each issue, but it was interesting how almost all issues had resonance in more than one area :

Gill Ross raised the issue of schools potentially not needing determinations to have worship that is not of a broadly Christian nature. She also highlighted the fact that the outcome of the election may well affect the structure of Local Authorities and how clerks operate.

Basil Mann and Dorothy Sadlik both raised situations from their SACREs where RE advisors have either already been lost or are about to be and asked for suggestions of ways to cope with this. In Harrow, a Chairs committee has been set up to try to cover some of this work, but it was recognised that this requires time and dedication.

Sarah Harris commented that the teaching profession is becoming more diverse and that support is needed to help teachers to lead lessons and assemblies on faiths other than their own.

Loretta Cohn suggested that the BoD set up a network of people who are willing to travel to speak in schools, especially to areas outside of the major Jewish communities. This is something we can look into and would be useful for us as we often receive requests from schools that are beyond our capacity to fulfil. If you are interested in being on such a list or know others that might be then please contact Hannah. In addition, the BoD can run “speakers panel” training to help build confidence of individuals to do this work – again, contact Hannah if interested!

Diane Barnett offered to circulate her “Day in the Life of....” PowerPoint which she uses for presentations about Judaism in schools.

Ruth Juett asked for assistance in combating apathy from schools with regards to engaging with Judaism, especially because of political issues around Israel.

Loretta Cohn asked for suggestions of resources which can be used to build teaching materials to supplement the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus. Nina Leigh suggested taking guidance from the materials on the Hertfordshire Grid for Learning website - <http://www.thegrid.org.uk/learning/re/>

Gary Webber told the group how Bath and North East Somerset SACRE have recently invested in £3000 of artefacts/resources for loan to schools. To support the use of these resources, he ran well-received training for teachers taking them through a model Shabbat.

Alex Klein asked about the possibility of teaching resources being made to support the JWOL CD-Rom. Ruth Dolby also stated that she is struggling to get secondary schools to take on the CD-Rom as it mentions key stage 1 -3 and not how it can be used above this level. Hannah will feed this information back to the working party for the JWOL CD-Rom project.

Dorothy Sadlik told the group of “Who are we” presentations that have been made at her SACREs, whereby members give an explanation of their personal backgrounds. These have been valuable in terms of building understanding and helping the SACRE team to bond.

Basil Mann gave a presentation on his recent experiences visiting the Abuyudaya Jewish community in Uganda and circulated photographs from his trip.

Support from the BoD

It is important for all SACRE reps to know that there is guidance and support available from Board, particularly when your Local Authority is reviewing the Agreed Syllabus, so please do not hesitate to contact us.

For further information about anything covered on the day, or for any SACRE or general education enquiries, please contact Hannah Ashleigh on 020 7543 5400 or hannah.ashleigh@bod.org.uk