



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1988 Volume V: Hormones and Reproduction

Introduction

Those between 10 and 15 years old are experiencing the marvels of hormones in their growth, development and maturity. They are also experiencing the commencement of reproduction in the form of physical changes, penis erection and menstruation. Pupils tend to be shy about asking questions and embarrassed by the topic of sex. Problems can be compounded by superficial answers from parents and teachers. In the 80s, with the high incidence of teenage pregnancies, with the advent of AIDS, with early maturation and with the diminishing age of puberty, there is a desperate need to teach, in the younger grades, about hormones, reproduction, what is happening to your bodies, how it is happening, and what can go wrong.

The standard approach has been to show pictures of the male and female anatomy, and give a long list of names of parts, of hormones, of glands, and of tissues. Explicit pictures can lead to shyness, embarrassment and giggling; the list of names becomes a list of facts, not necessarily tied together, and easily forgotten. Our objective is to help teachers relate Hormones and Reproduction to pupils as a science, rather than as a factual art. Having first learned the science, the facts (physical differences and changes) may become logical, fit into place, and become better remembered and understood. Using wherever possible similes and analogies that can be easily related to, gives students an understanding of hormone balance, or homeostasis. With this knowledge, how changes in the balance lead to growth, physical development, menstruation, menopause, and male/female sexuality, and help the body to control sugar use and stress, then makes sense. As does the use and misuse of hormones: sex steroids and how they achieve contraception, anabolic steroids and associated problems, “uppers” and “downers” and the damage they can do. Our aim is to give teachers the background that they may relate to students at the earliest age the principles of what is going on inside them, that they may understand it, be fascinated by it and respect it.

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