

Priscilla pictured with Duncan Goodhew at the Southern Water/ASA 'Learn to Swim' Conference 2006.

Priscilla was invited as the ASA's specialist on Voice protection to address the 200 strong conference at Burgess Hill, Sussex in October. She was delighted to meet Duncan Goodhew who was speaking on the importance of retaining swimming pools for the health of the nation.



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final whistle/Voice Projection/diary dates

Voice Projection and Protection – Priscilla Morris

The voice is a very delicate instrument. The vocal cords which actually produce sound from the breath passing through the voice box, are made up of thin layers of muscular tissue and mucous membranes which are very susceptible to drying out due to lack of water, poor air quality, stress etc. This can cause tiredness at the end of the day and when this continues over a period of time more acute problems can result. Those at greatest risk of causing damage to their vocal cords include all teachers, although those who operate by the swimming pool or on the pitch may be at particular risk.

When vocal strain continues throughout a term, the results can be dramatic. Over a period of time you may lose a section of your normal pitch range (often the top notes); find you have a permanently gravelly tone; lose your voice for short periods of time on a regular basis; lose individual

note bands permanently or, in extreme cases of abuse, cause growths (nodules) on the vocal cords which require surgical removal.

Basic voice protection training can help teachers learn a number of simple techniques, which will protect the voice. A three-hour workshop is sufficient to begin learning skills that, with practice, help you protect your voice during teaching sessions.

The workshops include an opportunity to exchange information and basic advice. Participants learn to understand their voice and are introduced to a special method of breathing. Posture is a key element in using the muscular structure of the chest to the full and a warm-up for the voice prepares you for the start of each day. Alongside these important elements there is also consideration of how you speak, with exercises on vocal range, resonance, clarity, emphasis, expression and gesture which are all vital in getting the message across.

After learning some of these useful and fascinating facts workshop participants are taught the importance of understanding their voice so that they can be alert for possible problems. Exercises are taught (with sheets of material to take home) so that skills can be developed after the course and fun, practical examples are used to re-enforce the learning.

Attending a workshop is just the start of the process and it is vital, if participants want to gain any benefit from the session, that regular practice takes place to strengthen the muscular structure (something that PE teachers should appreciate!).

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