



COMMUNITY

Building robots gets pupils excited about technology and teamwork

9 Nov 2017

Hong Kong teens make drug awareness videos to engage their peers

Three-year project by KELLY Support Group, a youth charity, also aims to teach participants leadership and life skills

PUBLISHED : Tuesday, 14 November, 2017, 1:34pm

UPDATED : Tuesday, 14 November, 2017, 9:49pm

COMMENTS:



Eddie Lee

Teenagers may not always respond well to parents and teachers lecturing them about the dangers of drug abuse, but what if the advice came in the form of engaging videos made by their peers?

RELATED TOPICS

- Operation Santa Claus
- Drugs

SCMP TODAY: HK EDITION

Get updates direct to your inbox

Enter your email

Organisers of a drug awareness programme based on youth leadership believe they have found an effective way to prevent substance use among teenagers.

Katherine Hampton, a programme coordinator at the [KELLY Support Group](#), said secondary school pupils joining their “ExCEL” campaign would take the lead and

develop resources concerning awareness of drug and alcohol use.

ExCEL is an acronym for express (Ex), connect (C), educate (E) and lead (L). It was launched in 2016 with support from Operation Santa Claus, an annual charity drive organised by the *South China Morning Post* and RTHK.

Young Hongkongers' easy access to illicit drugs – Ice, ketamine, marijuana – raises alarm

The three-year project, targeting vulnerable young people mainly from ethnic minority backgrounds and facing drug problems and issues of inequality, will also receive funding from Operation Santa Claus this year.

Students taking part in the programme are expected to develop the skills and knowledge needed to create culturally appropriate drug awareness information and decide how best to promote it to their peers who are more at risk.

“It’s a great way to offer students participating in the programme a role where they can design something that they know their peers will be interested in and that they will engage with,” Hampton said.

The Chinese children dancing away drug addiction

The awareness programme was designed based on evidence that showed that peer-led initiatives had been successful, she noted.

“It’s also a wonderful opportunity for the young people participating in the programme to build leadership skills and to develop their own personal confidence,” Hampton said, adding that life skills such as peer support and resistance strategies were also covered.

Ahmedzai Areej, 17, one of the students who helped create promotional materials for prevention of drug abuse, said she had enjoyed taking part in the project.

“In the programme, people were kind of like your friends. They were really open-minded. They wouldn’t tell you what not to do. They would just listen to you and help you out,” the secondary school pupil said.

Fellow participant Ivanna Wolfinbarger said the programme could kindle the creative streaks of those who took part.

“They help you think outside the box and promote positive thinking,” the 17-year-old said.

Student Jud Domingo Flores, 16, said he had benefited from the process of making videos.

“I learned to be more confident about showing my skills,” he said.

Changing lives for good: Operation Santa Claus launches 30th instalment

While stressing the importance of honing the students’ creativity and leadership skills, the project has also sought to engender a culture of non-judgmental peer support and positive messaging for at-risk young people in a number of districts around Hong Kong.

Sky Siu, executive director of the KELY Support Group, noted the difficulty in engaging with young drug users, who were averse to being judged by others.

“In the process of working with young people, we often find that not everyone is in a position to be ready to have a conversation about drugs and alcohol. I think one of the things we have to understand in Hong Kong society is that both of these topics are taboos,” she said.

Siu said the group, with a new round of funding from Operation Santa Claus, planned to reach out to more young people in need.

This article appeared in the South China Morning Post print edition as: A creative way to beat substance abuse