

1. Background to the Values Education Study (VES) 2002–2003

The Commonwealth Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, recently commissioned a national study promoting values education in Australian schools. He indicated that the study would include a school grants component. The initiative was supported by all State and Territory Ministers of Education at the July 2002 Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs meeting.

Curriculum Corporation is conducting the **Values Education Study (VES)** on behalf of the Department of Education, Science and Training. The study will provide information and advice on:

- views of parents, teachers and students on the values that the community expects Australian schools to foster;
- what school systems and sectors are currently doing to foster values education and, through it, the students' personal and social responsibilities;
- findings of key Australian and overseas research on values education approaches and their outcomes.

The grants

The Schools Action Research Case Studies Grant component is a central feature of the Values Education Study. Schools across Australia are invited to participate in short-term action research between November 2002 and April 2003 to demonstrate what they are doing in values education.

Individual schools may apply for grants of up to \$7,000. A cluster of two schools may apply for a grant of up to \$14,000 and a school cluster of three schools may apply for a grant of up to \$21,000.

Schools are encouraged to apply for a lesser amount if a smaller grant better suits their purposes and their capabilities.

Funding will be available for at least 60 school case studies. The case studies will enable schools to describe, illustrate, document and strengthen what they are already doing. In some cases they may enable the introduction of values-based education initiatives in the schools.

Purpose

The overall purpose of the Values Education Study is to provide a sound and informed basis from which improved values education can be developed and promoted in Australian schools. In particular, the purpose of the school grants projects is to determine how values can best be fostered in schools.

The grants will fund case studies in values education in which schools will provide descriptions of what they are doing, reflections on their practice, and conclusions and recommendations about the outcomes of their work. Their activity and reports will be used as a means of informing the Commonwealth about current best practice, the strengths and weaknesses in the practice, the issues that need to be addressed, and what needs to be done to strengthen values education outcomes in Australian schools. The school grants activity will in this way inform the development of relevant and well-founded principles and frameworks for future improvement of values education.

In summary the projects will:

- describe and demonstrate what values education is taking place in Australian schools (what values are being taught, how the schools identified and decided on those particular values, and how the schools go about the business of teaching and learning values);
- demonstrate the kind of relationships that exist between parents, teachers, students, school leadership, local communities and education authorities in the State and Territory systems and the Independent and Catholic school systems to support values education programmes;
- provide data, documentation and exemplars of 'good practice' to guide and inform the future development of improved values education.

Priorities

In allocating grants to schools, the project will ensure that there is an appropriate balance of schools from a range of contexts; that is, schools in different States and Territories; government and non-government schools; primary and secondary schools; rural/regional/ metropolitan schools; schools with high numbers of students in such categories as Indigenous, low socioeconomic status, and linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, students with disabilities and students at risk.

Priority in providing grants to schools will be given to case study activities that aim to achieve the following:

- emphasise values in the whole-school approach (including a focus on the physical, emotional, social and mental well-being of students and staff). Larger schools may opt for a whole-of-school-level approach such as for primary, or middle years or secondary levels;
- develop, implement and promote school value systems;
- demonstrate instructive and innovative practice in values education.

Grants may be used for supporting:

- development of school value systems (which could include student behaviour codes) and/or the application of such systems;
- integration of values learning into the overall school curriculum (for example, by strengthening student involvement in local communities and local voluntary organisations).

Schools may use project funding to engage consultants and/or professional development expertise to work with the school in developing its values education initiative.

Specific requirements

Successful schools will be required to convene at least one school-based **Values Education Forum**. The forum will be convened by the school at a time of its own choosing. The forum would bring together a representative group of the schools' parents, teachers and students where they can discuss and respond to key questions relating to their views and attitudes about what values the school can be expected to foster. Curriculum Corporation project officers will request the opportunity to attend a number of the school forums as a part of the Corporation's research.

The role of Curriculum Corporation

Curriculum Corporation will monitor progress of the school case studies, provide advice and offer assistance to help schools deliver the case studies on schedule. The Corporation will offer to conduct briefing sessions for successful schools in each State and Territory in December 2002. The Corporation will require schools to submit a final report and supporting documentation in early April 2003. The Corporation will develop guidelines and a template for these final reports.

Curriculum Corporation will establish and maintain a Values Education Study web page on its website (<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/index.php>). The VES web page will provide general project information and updates, including bulletins or announcements, reports and outlines on the school case studies, an email-based discussion group for grant schools to facilitate contact

with other schools, a calendar of events, and other materials relating to the study activities.

Curriculum Corporation will incorporate findings from the school action research case studies in the development of its *Values Education Study Report* to the Commonwealth in June 2003.

Process

Key dates

- Applications for grants must be received by close of business Friday 25 October 2002.
- Successful schools will be notified by Wednesday 20 November 2002.
- Successful schools will be required to make a brief interim report to Curriculum Corporation by Friday 28 February 2003.
- Final, fully documented report is due by Friday 4 April 2003.

Linkages

Applicant schools will need to link their proposals to the *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*.

(<http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/adelaide/adelaide.htm>) agreed by all Australian education ministers, particularly the goals that refer to students:

- acquiring self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem, and a commitment to personal excellence (Goal 1.2); and
- having the capacity to exercise judgement and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice and accept responsibility for their own actions.

Values Education Study also supports:

- building student resilience in secondary schools through the National School Drug Education Strategy (funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training) and the *MindMatters* programme (a whole-school mental health promotion initiative funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, <http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/>);

- learning about civic values through the Commonwealth's civics and citizenship programme *Discovering Democracy* (<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/democracy/index.htm>); and
- development of safe schools policies and practices.