

Islamic College Of South Australia: Values Education Forum

Background

The Islamic College of South Australia is located in the western suburbs of Adelaide at West Croydon. The student population of the college comes from over twenty-eight diverse cultural and non-English speaking backgrounds. The current student population is over 500 students.

In 2007 our school focused on Values Education. Our overall plan was to empower students to develop their understanding of 'Values Education', as students from diverse cultural backgrounds bring their own values and thoughts to all classroom learning. Work began by incorporating values education into staff meeting discussions and focusing on the connections between the *National Framework for Values Education*, the *Friendly Schools and Families Program* and *Program Achieve*. Now values education is integrated throughout all learning areas and specialist subjects.

The Friendly Schools and Families Program (anti-bullying program) was introduced towards the end of 2005, and developed extensively through staff meetings where, teachers and parents looked closely at aspects of the school (physical, classroom, ethos, community), along with revisiting school policies and terminology in school documents. Program Achieve was introduced during 2006.

In 2007 teachers, students and a parent body worked together in groups, reading and devising ways to articulate school policies in accordance with our school ethos and values education. All staff reviewed current school policies and integrated current values education guidelines in line with the practices for Australian schooling. Students became extensively involved in the whole process. Teachers involved in activities at staff meetings would then involve students through learning activities and the feedback was presented at the next staff meeting. This was a continual process that took many months and is still ongoing. We found our weekly school newsletter was an excellent way to update and involve parents /caregivers in the process. Values have now been woven into our policies, learning outcomes in all curriculum areas, our school community and everyday life.

Students, teachers and parents have been involved in an action plan that has really brought values to light.

Values Forum

Our Values Forum, held during Literacy and Numeracy Week, was a culmination of long-term planning, staff meetings, cluster meetings, student input and the deconstructing of the Values resource material. We wanted this forum to be a valuable learning experience, initiated by students and the school community - a forum where all students could demonstrate their understanding of values through Literacy, Numeracy and Islamic Studies.

Following are snapshots of student involvement in the forum.

Book Week Parade plays a large role in our Junior Primary school. This year students from Kindergarten to Year 2 paraded in colourful costumes, made by

themselves and their families, based on their favourite book character. The students sang a song in Arabic about caring for animals and the environment, which reflected the integration of values education into Arabic teaching. Teachers performed a short play based on the story, 'Where is the green sheep?' with each teacher portraying a value or Program Achieve key. Families were invited to celebrate with us and morning tea was prepared by the parents.

Years 3 and 4 students demonstrated their classroom learning from narrative writing, brochure design and singing with the school choir. The focus of the narrative writing was on 'doing your best' and the importance of persistence in success and in enabling students to develop the confidence to 'have a go'. Participation in the choir helped develop values of team work, cooperation, inclusion, support, and responsibility. Designing the brochures assisted students to articulate their own core values through reflecting on their thoughts and feelings.

Year 4 students also presented work they had undertaken on the rainbow of responsibility and how being responsible helps to contribute positively to the world.



The Years 5 and 6 students sang an anti-bullying song to teach others that they can stop bullying by getting along and cooperating. They identified the importance of the values of 'respect' and 'fair go' in preventing bullying. Students also presented a readers' theatre activity, postcards from Japan and a healthy eating PowerPoint.

A short play, 'Peace begins with us', which aimed to highlight anti-bullying issues and help students understand that respecting democratic and personal values are important in achieving peace, was performed by the Year 7 girls. The boys wrote a poem in Arabic describing the keys to success with an emphasis on positive learning habits.

Three artworks created by Year 9 boys at an 'Artist in residence' workshop, which combined values education and Program Achieve, have been framed and displayed at the school. The Year 9 girls helped organise the forum and acted as ushers.

The *Values for Australian Schooling* were integrated into Islamic Studies by the Year 10 students who translated verses of the Quran and Hadith into English, highlighting the common threads between values education and Islamic teachings. In Arabic classes, they translated the *National Framework for Values Education* into Arabic. They wrote a reflection on the value which had most meaning for them.



The Year 11 English Communications students completed four pieces:

1. Group task of a PowerPoint on friendship and the positive and negative aspects of life
2. Collage incorporating all values
3. Short narrative on each value and its relevance to their own life
4. Board game incorporating both literacy and numeracy.

The Year 11 ESL students embarked on an ambitious project combining school values with oral and visual literacies. The project was exciting for the students, as they were creating a real text for a real purpose.

The Year 12 students took on an enhanced leadership role leading up to our values forum.

Outcomes

An important outcome of the values education work that has occurred in our school is that our students are encouraged to reflect on their cultural and religious values, to develop values they believe are personally relevant to them and the school and wider community, in the context of 'Values Education' in Australia.

Having the values integrated throughout all learning areas has definitely enhanced and brought about a positive change in our school. Students, teachers and parents are now constantly using values terminology. Peer teaching is proving to be very successful and enables students to learn and build on their understanding of values through real live situations – students teaching students through their learning and understanding of values.