

Merrylands big values professional learning day



For the past six years, the Merrylands/Guildford Learning Community has held a combined professional learning program, including a Combined School Development Day (CSDD), in Term 3 of each school year. The aim of the day is to meet the needs of the school communities, as identified by our school plans. This year the CSDD was dedicated to Values Education and our participation in the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project – Stages 1 and 2 (VEGPSP).

Over 220 staff, 30 students, a small number of parents (representative of our seven school communities) and our Academic partner (Katina Zammit of the University of Western Sydney), were involved in the professional learning sessions. There were three recurrent themes throughout the day. These were: *valuing our students, valuing our efforts, valuing our school communities.*

The Combined School Development Day program included the following events:

- Welcome to country – delivered by Betty Eldridge, Aboriginal Education Assistant and parent at Merrylands High School and Hilltop Road Primary School. Koori students, representative of our cluster, acknowledged the traditional owners of the land and performed cultural dance, representative of the local Koori nation.
- Introductory presentation by Lila Mularczyk, Principal of Merrylands High School on the K-12 outcomes of our learning community
- Keynote presentation, delivered by Belinda Giudice, cluster coordinator. She spoke about the clusters involvement in Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the VEGPSP, current national and international literature surrounding the link between Quality Teaching and Values Education and specifically, the impact of a values-rich classroom on student learning, wellbeing, and self-worth.
- A session titled 'Student Voice' where we heard from student leaders across our seven schools. Topics included: values in our classrooms, values in the curriculum (across Key Learning Areas), values on the playground, values through sport, values outside of school, the importance of positive student-student and teacher-student interactions, characteristics of a good teacher, and the importance of teachers' and students displaying positive values.

- Students joined with their teachers to participate in a school climate session, which focused on the results of a survey completed by 220 staff and student leaders.
- A session devoted to the link between the NSW Quality Teaching Framework (NSW DET, 2003) and core values.
- A session presented by our Academic partner from the University Associates Network (Katina Zammit, UWS) on engagement, self-worth and values education. The session focused on messages from the 'Fair Go' project from 2006.

The day was a huge success and illuminated values education across the whole Merrylands/Guildford cluster. Previously, only a core group of staff, students and parents had been involved in this intense professional learning and it was then each school's responsibility to disseminate the information from the CSDD.

The agenda for the day was agreed upon by the principals and core personnel of our cluster and the staff that have been involved in the VEGPSP – Stage 2 project. They also took an active role as group facilitators on the day. Input was also given by our Academic partner and the NSW DET values education contact, Elaine Bennett. The student leaders determined the content and developed the session they ran.

A follow-up session on teaching and learning strategies that support values education in classrooms, to be run by the cluster coordinator Belinda Giudice, has been offered to all partner schools.

More about the Merrylands/Guilford cluster project for VEGPSP – Stage 1 can be found on the Values Education website at: <http://www.valueseducation.edu.au/values/default.asp?id=10443> and for Stage 2 at: <http://www.valueseducation.edu.au/values/default.asp?id=15922>.