

Point Lonsdale Primary School

Values education forum

Showcasing values in action

The Point Lonsdale Primary School Values Education School Forum was inspiring. The school has been actively promoting values education for a number of years now using the Tribes approach. It has been so successful that the school community is at the stage where it is confident enough to hand the responsibility of organising the values forum to its students. Teachers and parents were there of course, but they were guides rather than authority figures. There are not many schools that have arrived at this point yet.

The values education school forum held at Point Lonsdale Primary School in November 2005 proved to be a showcase of student leadership, engagement and participation.

From the outside Point Lonsdale Primary School looks much like most small country schools in regional Victoria; an eclectic collection of connected buildings, a large oval and 190 active children.

However, a closer inspection of the school reveals that behind this façade there is a beach. While this is unusual and adds an interesting aspect to the school environment, it is the way in which other spaces are filled which alerts visitors to other dimensions of school life. The school's environment contains an Indonesian garden, multiple mosaics and murals, a carved wooden dolphin seat, a climbing wall and newly built weather vane. All of these are school community projects which have been organised by the students. They talk about their school and these projects with pride, confidence and authority.

The aim of the forum was to reinforce school values through a blend of student led workshops, information sessions and inclusive community friendly activities. The student organising committee mapped the school values against the nine values for Australian schooling in the National Framework. The mapping of the values occurred during class time and provided the basis for the planning of activities for the school forum day.

Workshops centred on comparing the school's values with the values in the National Framework. In these workshops students discussed:

- school design – valuing our environment;

- leadership – what makes a good leader?
- civics and citizenship – what is an Australian?
- respect;
- cultural diversity;
- inclusion.

The student leadership team ran the school assembly and the following speech made at this assembly best captures the type of values and culture promoted at the school.

Students, parents, teachers and willing mums and dads who help around the school, we are known as a community.

As a community we have accomplished many things like our wind vane, the mural on the shelter shed wall, the Indonesian Garden, the car track, the dolphin pod seat and most of all the successes that children here at Point Lonsdale have achieved over many years.

This is all due to the fact that we are able to work together as a team, each person contributing their personal best and celebrating what we achieve as a whole school community.

As a Grade 6 student this year I see it as an important factor to continue to work together in all aspects so the students at this school are able to work in a better learning environment.

To the students I say, carry on doing your personal best, take up as many leadership roles as you can, put yourself forward because to be part of a team can only bring you success at a personal level – and consequently maintain this fantastic school community.

To sum up, what you put in is what you get out. Thank you.

Jake Hedley, Grade 6

At lunchtime students conducted a community market. The produce was handmade, locally grown and home baked and the money collected was donated to a student-selected charity.

What was impressive about this forum was the way in which the students were at the centre of proceedings. A genuine culture of whole school learning was evident. The multi-age groups looked at ease in collaborative learning circles. The teachers facilitated workshops but for the most part remained in the background. The parents participated, listened, helped and discussed. The principal was happy to hand responsibility over to the student leadership team. And the nine core values for Australian schooling stood up well to student scrutiny. In the end the beach didn't seem to matter that much.

Gary Shaw, Values Education Project Officer, Victorian Department of Education and Training

Reflecting on a visit to Point Lonsdale Primary School for a values education forum on 23 November 2005.