The Values Education Good Practice Schools Project – Stage 1


Something worthwhile to teach

The following project specifically focused on embedding values in the school curriculum and/or connecting to broader systemic curriculum frameworks that apply.

A K–12 character framework

The Central Queensland Character Framework Cluster (Qld) researched and developed a K–12 character framework to support a whole school approach to embedding and explicitly teaching values in the curriculum.

Central Queensland Character Framework Cluster, Queensland
Cluster coordinator: Mr Andrew Johnson, Heights College
Participating schools:
- Bundaberg Christian College
- Calvary Christian College
- Emerald Christian College
- Heights College
- Mackay Christian College

UAN critical friend: Dr Colette Alexander, Christian Heritage College, Queensland

The Central Queensland Character Framework Cluster of Christian Schools of Australia used their project to research and develop a K–12 character framework that will support a whole school approach to embedding, and explicitly teaching, values in the curriculum.

With the lead school in the cluster showing the way – having a foundational philosophy already in place, based on the three key entry points for students and staff alike of ‘I know who I am, I know what I must do, and I know how to do it’ – each school followed a similar action path where it:
- surveyed the college community (students, staff, parents, employers) on the values they believe important;
- collated these values into similar groupings;
- gave a title to each of the value groups;
- placed these value groups into a matrix to match them to the national values;

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• explicitly taught these values in age-appropriate sequential learning experiences in the classroom.

In addition, every classroom teacher was interviewed to determine:
• the values they have taught in the past;
• what they think are the most appropriate and/or needed values to teach at the relevant age level;
• what resources they have found important for teaching values;
• how they have been able to link what is taught at their year level to what is taught in years both above and below.

All of this data informed the development of the character matrix to guide values teaching and learning in the school. In the case of the lead school, which has been involved in such activity for some time, the framework is based on the notion of ‘servant leader’ and the qualities such a person requires: knowledgeable person; critical thinker; creative person; resilient investigator; relevant communicator; community member; and reflective learner.

Other schools in the cluster adopted somewhat more of an acrostic approach, such as the use of GEMS (God, Excellence, Members and Service) to convey the values they sought to teach, and FACETS (Friendly, Appreciative, Compassionate, Encouraging, Truthful) to demonstrate how these values are applied.

In a somewhat similar vein, another school chose L’RACE (Leadership in learning, Right relationships and environment, Affirming individuals, Clear vision and goals, Embracing challenge) to depict the values its teachers strive to uphold, and CLEAR (Christ-likeness, Learning, Excellence, Attitude, Respect) as its manifestation of what students might try to achieve.

Having identified its own particular group of values and stance, each school in the cluster then worked to develop a draft framework of learning experiences to embed the identified values in the culture, curriculum and operations of the school. More specifically, a matrix was developed to ensure that values are taught in each year level in sequential year progression appropriate to the relevant age group.

Some of the flavour of the approach can be gained from the sample year level outworking of the character framework in the cluster lead school for the preparatory year contained in Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value statement</th>
<th>Students value knowledge by taking responsibility for their learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Students in Prep are being initially exposed to pre-literacy and</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
pre-numeracy learning experiences. As these are predominantly play-based activities, students are exposed to learning based on their interest, social interactions, available resources and teacher-initiated opportunities. Knowledge gained is often the result of cause and effect, as students start to consolidate the foundational level of their knowledge bank. By the end of the year, ownership and therefore responsibility for knowledge and learning is enhanced through sight word lists, take home readers, increased class expectations and formal homework.

| Definition | In Prep, Knowledge is what we learn about ourselves, others and the world around us. In Prep, Responsibility for learning means being involved in activities, posing questions, making predictions, asking why and sharing ideas with others. |
| Learning experiences | • Reading books on responsibility such as …  
• Being involved in role-play scenarios that demonstrate situations in which people are and are not responsible and do and do not value knowledge |
| Resources | A range of faith-based books recommended by Paul Loth, at least one of which has questions at the end of each story in a ‘think about this’ section |
| Assessment | To be discussed and confirmed with class teachers |
| Reporting comment | To be discussed and confirmed with class teachers |

This becomes even more detailed in specific learning experiences in classes from K–12, related to six posters the school has produced using famous people to display particular values: Character (Don Bradman); Leadership (Peter Cosgrove); Courage (Winston Churchill); Perseverance (Helen Keller); Influence (Cecilia May Gibbs); and Mateship (Edward ‘Weary’ Dunlop). A sample of the poster is provided in Figure 17 for Years 1 and 2.

**Figure 17: Unpacking the character framework using the six posters (sample extract)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year level</th>
<th>Character – Sir Don Bradman</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55 Essentials value statement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Years 1 and 2 | Rule 8: Don’t show disrespect with gestures. Value 7: Respect A relevant | Activity 1  
• What is a character? Give a brief definition.  
• Role-play good and bad character traits and have the children play thumbs up,
| communicator characterised by attentiveness and grace | thumbs down.  
- Colour the word (good or bad) that best describes the character trait that the clip art is portraying.  
- Draw a picture of a person who they know with good character.  
Activity 2  
- Read to the children a biography of Don Bradman. Make it into a simple book with coloured pictures.  
- Give the children a copy of the book and have them illustrate the events in his life.  
Activity 3  
- Revise the Bradman biography.  
- The children cut and paste words that relate to his character around the picture. Have the children add a couple of their own.  
Activity 4  
- Revise what it means to have good character.  
- Role-play situations showing disrespect with gestures. Have the children recognise actions that would have shown good character. Role-play the same scenario in a positive manner.  
- Give the students an everyday problem that they could face in the playground. In pairs they need to solve the problem without using gestures that show disrespect.  
- Read Boggin, Blizzy and Sleeter the Cheater: A Book about Fairness, by Michael P. Waite. Discuss alternative actions that could have been used.  
Activity 5  
- Discuss ways that we can show good character.  
- Give the children a list of different situations that might happen at school. Have them decide whether the person in the situation showed good or bad character by colouring either a smiling or frowning face. |
Each teacher in the school, and for that matter the cluster as a whole, also now has received a folder to use in developing age appropriate activities in this context containing quotes, websites, suggested activities, links to other resources and more.

As a result of trialing the approach across the schools, staff have, the cluster explains

… realised that they have been teaching values for many years, but in an implicit … rather than explicit way. This project enabled teachers to develop what they had already been doing into something more explicit, thus enabling the pilot team to develop a structured framework based on teachers’ ideas with new resources and suggestions. As a consequence of using teacher-initiated ideas and resources there was a very high proportion of teacher ‘buy in’ and personal ownership of the … folder and subsequent learning experiences. The introduction of the Character Framework saw these learning experiences presented in a sequential manner to ensure that target values were taught and reinforced in a formalised manner in each classroom.

**Key messages**

1. Surveying staff to determine their current practices and beliefs about how they teach values is a good way to begin to implement values education in many schools.

2. Providing a local school-based framework for teachers assists them in identifying how they can teach values in an explicit way.

3. One teaching strategy to consider is to engage students in discussions and other explorations of a range of individuals and/or icons that exemplify the values espoused by the school. Such an approach can help demonstrate that values are espoused and enacted in varying ways, rather than there being one set or ‘right’ approach.

4. There are benefits in schools working as a cluster with one school taking the leading role to support and mentor others in their development. This does, however, depend on the appointment of a cluster coordinator(s) with the personal capacities and skills to fulfil the role.