The Values Education Good Practice Schools Project – Stage 1

The following has been extracted from Implementing the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools: Report of the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project – Stage 1: Final Report September 2006.

http://www.valueseducation.edu.au/values/default.asp?id=16381

Teaching it well

Teaching and learning were the prime focus of the work of the following project cluster.

Teaching for social action

The Nerang Alliance of State Schools Cluster (Qld) focused on using social literacy and student-led social action projects as the main vehicle for inculcating values education in all key learning areas.

Nerang Alliance of State Schools Cluster, Queensland
Cluster coordinators: Ms Lynne Bell, Nerang State High School and Ms Rita Bishop, Worongary State School
Participating schools:
- Beechmont State School
- Gilston State School
- Nerang State School
- Numinbah Valley Environmental Education Centre
- Numinbah Valley State School
- William Duncan State School
- Worongary State School
- Nerang State High School

UAN critical friend: Dr Mark Freakley, Griffith University, Queensland

The diverse group of seven schools and an Environmental Education Centre that comprise the Nerang Alliance of State Schools Cluster has focused on using social literacy as the main vehicle for inculcating values education in all key learning areas. More specifically, they are working together to ‘improve social literacy through Social Action Projects as a core learning component for students from all levels … up to Year 9’. In that sense, it is ‘the medium through which we can teach values education to improve the resilience and learning capacity of our students’.

Though the schools in the cluster had some experience of operating as an alliance of schools there were, at the beginning, what their report refers to as ‘varied perceptions’ about the purpose and form their joint project should take; necessitating work on the cluster itself, particularly if they were going to work at
‘anything but a superficial level’. The process adopted is best described in the cluster’s own words:

This project required real agreement to move forward and to do that everyone had to let go of their professional ‘egos’ and the individual school ‘identity’, and think as one … [having sought input and support from another cluster and relevant personnel] Eventually, open and frank discussions took place in which it was finally agreed to move forward with a common approach to be established, each school then set about selecting the Values Key Teachers who would be their representatives on the values curriculum development team.

At this time, the annual Nerang Alliance of State Schools common pupil free day … was held with two keynote speakers and several workshops directly related to values education. As well, all the Values Key Teachers and administrators sat together for the first time to get some common understanding of what the project was about. This proved to be a very difficult conversation. It became evident that these personnel were still unclear about the fact that full agreement must be reached as to how values-based social literacy could be developed across the whole alliance … The first breakthrough occurred when one of the Values Key Teachers stated that the project would get nowhere if each individual school kept on about what they wanted …

The second breakthrough occurred when the first working day was held with the Values Key Teachers and Principals. [After a range of input and activity, the cluster coordinator] was given the green light to further develop this [inquiry-based learning model] as the vehicle to move the NASS Social Literacy Project forward and to present it for consideration at the next Values Key Teacher day …

This was a major milestone as the next time everyone gathered … [she] presented her model, now much refined [see Figure 20], and the group gave her their full support to move on together … to develop their own Social Action Projects …
Figure 20: Sample Framework for Taking Social Action

1. **Determine values, outcomes, knowledge, skills and attitudes to be developed**

2. **Pose critically framed question/issue**
   that will require higher order thinking skills

3. **Inspire. Stimulate. Establish emotional connection. Activate prior knowledge and understanding**
   Determine direction, boundaries, conditions, groups and range of texts to produce. (Use brainstorming)

4. **Build**
   a deep knowledge – move from known to unknown

5. **Research**
   locate and select information from a range of multi-literate resources

6. **Organise**
   discuss, consider, select, improve

7. **Create**
   proofread + edit.
   Design layout + presentation

8. **Ideate**
   What will it look like? What materials will I use?

9. **Investigate**
   gather knowledge, ideas, data

10. **Produce**
    a product or model

11. **Experiment/investigate/observe**

12. **Gather data**

13. **Make and test hypothesis**

14. **Draw conclusions**

15. **Produce report**

16. **Present**

17. **Evaluate**
   product and process
   Include self, peer and teacher assessment

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**THE SUPER 6 STEPS TO SOCIAL ACTION**

- **TUNE IN**
- **FIND OUT**
- **TAKE ACTION**
- **CONSIDER, SELECT, CREATE**
- **SHARE**
- **EVALUATE**

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**Emphasis on teacher as facilitator**

**Explicit instruction provided as needed**

**Students use reflection journals throughout process**
As the preparation of the units progressed, so did the relationships between these teachers from across the alliance schools. They were now focused on doing real work together and demonstrated a level of trust that had not been witnessed before. When it came to a decision on how this project would be presented to the total teaching staff in every school, they did not hesitate to agree on one common PowerPoint® presentation that they would all present on the first pupil free days in January 2006 …

Through this common approach … we were able to gain a commitment from teachers to trial at least one of the values-based Social Action units with students during 2006.

One particularly interesting aspect of all of this work to ensure the cluster operated in a united and effective way, is the following reflection sheet (Figure 21) used to promote thinking about values material teachers may read, which constitutes a potentially powerful professional learning tool other schools could use.

**Figure 21: Values Readings Reflection Sheet**

Reading: ____________________________

What are the main points you learned from this reading?

1.

2.

3.

How does this new learning relate to teaching about values in your classroom programme?

- Which current practices have been reinforced?

- Which current practices have been challenged?

What points will you discuss with your group members to help you to learn more or change any of your practices in relation to values education?

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The major product arising from the cluster’s work to date has been the publication of the set of Values/Inquiry Based Learning Units the teachers have committed to use. The first ten units, listed in Table 9, were developed using a common planning pro forma which linked literacy and values in the context of social action projects teachers could use.

**Table 9: Values social literacy units**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schooling level</th>
<th>Inquiry Based Learning Units</th>
<th>Focus KLAs</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Lower primary (1, 2 and 3) | FRIENDS
What makes a good friend?  
WIPE OUT WASTE
How can we make our school beautiful? | SOSE, HPE and Arts | Care and Compassion, Responsibility, Honesty, Responsibility |
| Middle primary (4, 5) | WATER WISE
What does it mean to be water wise?  
WHO MADE AUSTRALIA GREAT?  
GOING, GOING, GONE
Do animals have rights? Can we protect our animals before it is too late? What can we do to make a difference? | Science
SOSE
SOSE/Science | Respect, Responsibility
Doing Your Best, Respect, Responsibility |
| Senior primary (6, 7) | FACES OF AUSTRALIA
What do you value about cultural diversity?  
VALUED POSSESSIONS
What do you value and why?  
BEING AUSTRALIAN
Who are we and where do we come from? | SOSE/HPE
English
SOSE | Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion
Freedom, Doing Your Best, Respect, Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion |
| High school (8, 9) | HUMAN RIGHTS
Every man for himself? | English, SOSE | Integrity |
### One for all or all for one?

**AUSTRALIA’S PLACE IN THE 21st CENTURY**

What is Australia’s role in helping to resolve conflicts in our region given that we are a multicultural society?

Is it possible for Australia to ‘stay out’ of conflicts that do not directly involve us?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Integrity, Care and Compassion, Respect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The planning pro forma referred to has room to record the targeted values, the leading questions, the host key learning areas, and key questions to assist teachers to work through the stages of inquiry-based learning. At each stage, teachers are provided with a table which includes:

- a description of the stage – ie one or more of the stages the school adopted on the basis of work by Murdoch (1998) and Wilson and Wing (2003)\(^1\) comprising:
  - tuning in (orientating)
  - finding out (enhancing)
  - sorting out (enhancing)
  - drawing conclusions (synthesising)
  - taking social action (synthesising)
  - evaluating (synthesising);

- the skills that may be developed – eg communicating, defining, decision making, group work;

- focus questions – eg What do you know about …? Have you ever felt/seen/experienced …?;

- the teaching and learning strategies that may be employed – eg brainstorming, graffiti boards, mind mapping.

Specific guidelines provided to teachers then advised that ‘at each stage of the inquiry process, explicit planning and teaching occurs to facilitate desired knowledge and skills. Individual, group and whole class reflections at each stage are also incorporated to examine values, targeted knowledge, concepts, skills, processes, texts and products’.

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Some of the flavour of the actual teaching and learning manifestations of the approach can be gained from the following extract from the ten-week unit on Australia’s place in the 21st century for students in Year 9. The unit, ‘hosted’ by the English faculty, aimed to build knowledge of:
- a range of conflicts current in our world;
- the extent of Australia’s involvement in past wars;
- the five elements of the novel.

Specific skills targeted by the unit were research skills, effective note taking including bibliography, and genres such as the analytical essay, radio news report and interview.

Table 10 then gives a taste of the pedagogical processes used for the initial ‘tuning in’ stage and then the ‘social action’ with which students are expected to engage.

**Table 10: Australia’s Place in the 21st Century unit (extract)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of inquiry</th>
<th>Focus questions</th>
<th>Teaching/learning episodes</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Tuning in        | • What does large scale conflict mean?  
|                  | • Do you have any first-hand knowledge of large scale conflict?  
|                  | • What do you know from the media about conflict in the world?  
|                  | • What would you like to learn? What do you know about Australia’s involvement in past wars? | • Brainstorm on the board  
|                  |                  | • Mind map  
|                  |                  | • Pass the Ball – students contribute thoughts and information as they pass the ball  
|                  |                  | • Provide resources showing the invasions of Darwin, Broome, Sydney and Papua New Guinea (videos, pictures, articles).  
|                  |                  | • Explain the conflict in Timor.  
|                  |                  | • Read a short story with war as the theme. (Read with students or allow them to read it by themselves.) | • Ongoing note taking  
|                  |                  |                  | • Vocabulary list |

| Taking social action | • Refer to your notes on the global conflict you have researched. Have you changed your views on it? How? Why?  
|                      | • What can you do | • Each group takes notes and reports back to the rest of the class.  
|                      |                  | • Students brainstorm response to essay topic, plan and draft their essay. After teacher checks draft they complete final copy in own. | • Write a radio news report on the global conflict you have researched. You will present this to your peers as |
An even more overt example of social action students might undertake can be found in the unit on ‘What does it mean to be water wise?’ (Table 11), which more readily lends itself to direct action within and beyond the school.

Table 11: Social action on what it means to be water wise (Years 4–5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of inquiry</th>
<th>Focus questions</th>
<th>Teaching/learning episodes</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taking social action</td>
<td>• What resources will I need to undertake this action? • What assistance will I need? • What difficulties might I have? • Next week/lesson I need to … • Are all group members doing their fair share? • Have I done my bit?</td>
<td>• Water Wise Expo - Negotiate range of activities/displays that will be included in the expo. Aim to include samples of work undertaken through the term. - Establish timelines and student responsibilities. - Encourage students to undertake different roles: meet and greet, invitations, advertisements, signage, catering, speakers, photographer, management of each display, performers.</td>
<td>• Participation – individual and group work • Letter writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake social project</td>
<td>• Present/share about conflict in the world around us? • Revisit the topics about global conflict the students researched earlier. Class group discusses whether their views have changed as a result of reading their novel (John Marsden’s <em>Tomorrow When the War Began</em>). • Teach radio news report genre. • Allow students time to convert their research into a news report.</td>
<td>a news report and provide your teacher with a hard copy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
And in each of the units the cluster has produced there are many rich examples of teaching and learning activities for all of the stages in the inquiry-based learning process.

The whole approach, it should be emphasised, did not just stand on its own, but was consciously integrated to the range of school and system priorities teachers are expected to address, as evident in the two diagrams in Figure 22, which were presented as part of a common pupil-free day.
The accompanying commentary explained:

Queensland has a large number of current initiatives. The Values Key Teachers are well aware of the overcrowded curriculum and they endeavoured to discover a vehicle to deliver values education by working smarter, not harder … The Nerang Alliance is embedding values education within an inquiry-based approach and will deliver this goal through participation in Social Literacy experiences within a social action project. Social literacy experiences refer to the wide range of reading, viewing, writing, speaking and listening activities students undertake as they interact with their social world.

Though still relatively new, anecdotal evidence already is emerging of the positive impact of the approach on students in the schools, as evident in the following
vignette from a teacher observing the delivery of a growth and sexuality class by a visiting presenter from Family Planning:

‘So what type of values do people have when it comes to sex?’ asks the (visiting) Growth and Sexuality teacher. Student A raises their hand and says, ‘You should be caring and compassionate.’ The teacher, although puzzled, replies with a praising statement. Student B then raises their hand and says, ‘Everyone should get a fair go’.

Although quite comical, this scenario did actually take place during a growth and sexuality lesson in my classroom. It was fascinating to observe that students, who had been explicitly exposed to the nine core values, could recall information and comment using appropriate vocabulary when they recognised the word ‘values’ in a question …

Explicit examples such as the above scenario would lead to providing welcomed feedback that the Values Based Unit I had taught, along with the school’s approach to values education had indeed made an impact on the students. Use of a common language and the promotion of values awareness at our school were well and truly alive and kicking.

Above all, this reflects the way in which, to use the words of one of the schools involved, the project ‘challenged staff to share the classroom journey with students. Teachers negotiating social actions and having students believe at the end of the units that “we did this ourselves”, was a key challenge. It has caused staff to reflect and think about how best to engage students and is an ongoing process in the school’.

Little wonder, perhaps, to find Key Values Teachers at least noting how the project ‘has broadened my views about educating students and has become a welcome addition to my teaching philosophy’. It is, another observed, also highly sustainable within the cluster:

With the Nerang Alliance Values Unit Plans embedded in our Rich Task Cycle, the teaching of values through social literacy is being addressed. Making use of the Social Action Planning Framework, future plans written by staff at our school will involve the teaching and development of values. As children work through the units, they will be developing a greater social awareness and their own personal sense of right and wrong.

**Key messages**

1. It is important in developing units of work that they fit within current state initiatives and pedagogical approaches so teachers do not see values as an add on, but rather as a means of working smarter, not harder. An inquiry-based learning approach is particularly conducive to embedding values in the curriculum in this way.
2. Frameworks and diagrams that illustrate where pieces of the puzzle fit can assist teachers to make links to school- and jurisdiction-based initiatives, rather than seeing values education as an add on to an already overcrowded curriculum.

3. Successful units of work incorporate both content and pedagogical advice. In other words, teaching it well goes hand in hand with having something worthwhile to teach.

4. There are benefits for students when teachers are challenged to share the classroom journey with their students as opposed to controlling the classroom learning environment.

5. Open discussion of individual school agendas is required for a combined agenda to be forged on which the cluster as a whole can advance. This in turn requires the cluster to plan and allow time for specific activities that foster dialogue between all cluster schools. It is important to spend time getting to know each other, even if you’ve already been working together over a number of years.