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

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 ‘sense of the sacred’ in KLAs

The Sydney Catholic Schools Cluster (NSW) led the revision of existing resources for integrating values across the curriculum in light of the subsequent emergence of the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools and recently revised syllabuses in New South Wales.

Sydney Catholic Schools Cluster, Sydney Diocese, New South Wales
Cluster coordinator: Jenny Rickard, Domremy College
Participating schools:
• Bethlehem College
• Domremy College
• Casimir Catholic College
• De La Salle College
• Holy Spirit College
UAN critical friends: Dr Maureen Walsh and Dr Elizabeth Labone, Australian Catholic University, NSW

A Sense of the Sacred is a project initiated in the 1990s in response to a need expressed by principals and teachers in Catholic schools for practical assistance in the integration of values across the curriculum. The Sydney Catholic Schools Cluster involved five schools in effectively leading the revision of these earlier resources in specific key learning areas in light of both the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools and recently revised Board of Studies syllabuses in New South Wales.

It is a project that has seen:
• the development and printing of values statements specific to key learning areas (KLAs) for use in the induction of teachers, along with a generic values statement for inducting classroom teachers to primary schools;

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the development and printing of KLA-specific values posters;
the drafting of sample units of work that have been trialed by teachers in cluster schools;
a Sense of the Sacred link being added to the Sydney Catholic Education Office website;
the drafting of an outline for an initial professional learning experience to help inform teachers in the area of values education;
a pending formal launch for the materials to ensure school leaders become fully engaged.

Assisted by their university associate, selected expert KLA teachers from within and beyond the cluster workshopped values at the start to clarify the ones they sought to pursue in curriculum terms, and identify previous examples of ‘successes and challenges’ in relation to values education. This in turn provided the context for determining how best to integrate values into different KLAs, with the range of values identified being incorporated on values posters that both teachers and students could discuss. These posters used KLA-specific symbols designed by a visual arts teacher working with the team, using images that have significance for the subject area and classroom teaching, so they are displayed around schools.

More specifically, posters have been produced for each of English, Mathematics, Science, Human Society and its Environment, Technological and Applied Studies, Creative Arts and Languages, with copies to be provided to all Catholic schools as part of the formal launch negotiated for May 2006. The posters, it should be acknowledged, were greeted by some teachers as too busy and using too many muted tones, but all agreed that they did help spur dialogue about the values in their schools (see sample in Figure 13).

In addition, an A4 fold-over values statement for each KLA has been produced, along with a generic statement for teachers in primary schools, to be used for induction of new staff. The statement includes the graphic of the relevant poster on the back cover, and values information specific to Catholic schools inside, but readily lends itself to adaptation by other sectors outside the Catholic system and even individual schools.
A number of units of work also have been developed, and are being trialed in cluster schools to integrate values into different KLAs. The units vary in length and format,
but do effectively engage students in values education, as the following two examples reveal.

Example 1: Geography in Year 8
One cluster school developed and taught a Year 8 unit on Global Inequality focusing in particular on the values of Care and Compassion, Integrity and Responsibility. Students were led through a range of learning activities and assessment tasks aimed at raising their understanding of, and compassion towards, those people in the world suffering from poverty.

The four-week unit incorporated a range of teaching and learning strategies such as:

- A pamphlet/leaflet – Students designed a leaflet aimed at informing other students their own age of the issue. They had to define global inequality; the global patterns of poverty and wealth; the access people have to such essential aspects of life as food, health, shelter and water; and suggest actions that individuals and groups can take to help alleviate problems caused by global inequality.
- A song or poem – an empathic piece to be played or read within the school to raise awareness of global inequality.
- Poster – a visual reminder of the positive and negative images associated with global inequality.
- A bracelet – to be created with a slogan that voices an idea or image associated with global inequality and which could be sold to raise money for a relevant charity.

Example 2: A Year 10 History trial
Teachers in another cluster school trialed two lessons on the topic of the Federation/Immigration Restriction Act (White Australia Policy) as part of a focus on the values of Tolerance and Acceptance.

In the first lesson students were guided in discussion about the central issues of the topic, using primary sources to reflect on attitudes, and responding to such questions as:

- Why were/are people anti-immigration or pro-immigration?
- How/why had Australia changed its attitudes towards immigration?
- How do you feel about immigration today?

Discussions continued into the second trial lesson with students seeking to answer:

- Why did we have an Immigration Restriction Policy in 1901?
- Why did attitudes change towards a multicultural Australia?
- You have been asked to draft an immigration policy. Outline what you would include and why.
Suffice to say that analysis of student reactions to the first of these units at least, which spanned no more than a short two-period trial, showed a significant shift in thinking had occurred. As two of them simply explained in their evaluations of what they had learned:

- I didn’t realise so many were suffering in the world and to realise how lucky I am.
- I feel and think differently about others from completing the task.

This change in attitude was reflected in practice with, as the school’s cluster representative explained, ‘students … actively participating in donating money to charities and many students have become involved in the school’s Social Justice or CARE programme’.

Interestingly enough, the experience also translates into a more positive attitude towards values education as such and, somewhat pleasingly for the teacher concerned,

> most of these students could also identify and name more values in both [ie two of the KLA] posters. As the evaluation of the unit took place four months after being taught, it was encouraging to see so many values still remembered by the students.

**Key messages**

1. Students respond positively to a range of learning and teaching strategies such as role-plays, empathy writing, research, poster design, bracelet construction and discussion.

2. Teachers who trial values education units should conduct some professional development for others to encourage greater take-up by more teachers and hence move implementation into the next stage.