Students for the Biosphere Cluster  
Victoria  

Considering Self, Others and the Local and Global Environment  

Cluster coordinator: Marnee Fraser, Students for the Biosphere Cluster (until January 2008) and Anne O’Bryan, Dromana Secondary College  

Participating schools:  
• Dromana Secondary College  
• Balnarring Primary School  
• Dromana Primary School  
• Mt Martha Primary School  
• Peninsula Special Development School  
• Red Hill Consolidated School  
• Somers Primary School  
• Somers School Camp  

UAN critical friend: Dr Libby Tudball, Monash University, Victoria  

Key messages  
1. Values education strategies, within classrooms and in the natural environment, give students both a place and a language for expressing feelings and reflecting on their relationships to self and others, and on their responsibilities as global citizens.  
2. Schools can connect in local ways to global issues. The cluster found that the core value of respect allowed them to connect to the UNESCO sustainability framework, which, when unpacked, provides the foundation for understanding important global issues at a more concrete level.  
3. Values education concepts link strongly to the Victorian Principles of Learning and Teaching and support the key principles of positive relationships and promoting a culture of respect for individuals and their communities.  
4. When parents work with their children on real-life environmental projects, significant drive, authentic learning and tangible community building ensues.
The prime purpose of **Considering Self, Others and the Local and Global Environment** was to inject the values from the **National Framework** into the teaching and learning programs of the participating schools. The cluster hoped to improve teaching and learning outcomes and enable the students to behave appropriately in the context of self, others and the local and global environment.

Whole cluster activities were designed to enable all seven schools in the cluster to have their individual projects unified under the cluster’s umbrella project. Significant links and partnerships were developed with a variety of community groups and external organisations, including:

- CERES (Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies)
- Mornington Peninsula Shire
- Sunrise Energy Management
- Ecostrategies
- Clean Ocean Foundation
- Environment Protection Authority
- Australian Conservation Foundation
- Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere Reserve Foundation.

To encourage this unity of purpose, the cluster coordinator drew the attention of all cluster schools and teachers to the **National Framework** and explored with them its connection to the Students for the Biosphere project. At each of the cluster schools, two representatives volunteered to represent their school in values team meetings, which acted as a think tank to enable individual schools to progress their projects in individual school settings. With this structure in place, a number of practical, cross-cluster activities were pursued.

A cluster student leader’s team was formed to act as peer mentors in each school. Students worked in small groups and identified ‘respect’ as the key value required to enable all students to feel safe and supported at school. They suggested that respect should operate at a number of levels, including self, others, respect for the environment (physical and natural); and that this value also needed to be modelled and exemplified by all school staff.

At Somers School Camp the values of challenge, tolerance, awareness and self-esteem were the focus of attention. All school practices were reviewed in terms of their consistency with these four values. The review revealed that in some instances this consistency was not present, and therefore recommended further research and action. The school aims and ethos evolved into a living document as the school blended the values into them. This process involved the whole staff, visiting teachers, parents, children and critical friends from the University of Melbourne, La Trobe University and the Australian Council of Educational Research. The review culminated in the preparation of a values diagram (see Figure 2 on page 125).

These values were then applied to the curriculum, school structures and policies, procedures and rules, funding priorities, decision-making procedures, discipline and welfare policy as well as pastoral care approaches. It became a living model which permeated all aspects of Somers School Camp.

At Peninsula Special Developmental School, two teachers developed a ‘term manual for values’. They worked together to provide resources and ideas for classroom strategies that would help other teachers to include values education teaching and learning in their classes.

At Red Hill Primary School the project focused upon developing a positive classroom culture. As one teacher commented:

> We began our focus on values education by doing what we often do: thinking about what makes a good school, and what goes into creating a positive classroom environment for teachers and students. The intention was ... to create a foundation where our students will develop the understanding and skills to become better global citizens and will grow from being responsible and respectful children into adults with these values as well.

A consultant conducted a professional development day at which staff awareness about values education was raised. Staff were provided with new ways of thinking about values education that was weaved into classrooms explicitly.

One such activity was the Five Whys: Determining Why We Come to School. Through the Five Whys, students determined their purpose for attending school. For example, Grade 6 students had to consider the question: ‘Why am I coming to school
to do Grade 6 this year?’ Through a graphic organiser one student ascertained that:

through doing her best and taking responsibility for her own learning she could prepare for high school which would enable her to go to university. Then she could become a teacher so she can make money to get married, build a house, and have children. She could reflect that by coming to school in Grade 6 it would ultimately enable her to ‘have lived a great life’.

This showed that the student was able to take responsibility for her actions and see that certain behaviours are valued in the community, and that by ‘doing her best’, she may achieve her goals. This activity highlighted to students that they come to school not just ‘because they have to’, but to establish themselves as lifelong learners. The project has spawned numerous other similar activities.

At Balnarring Primary School the staff developed values through their Point Leo beach camp experience. Teachers were keen to see values education integrated into the whole school program in diverse ways, and see the school’s strong emphasis on ‘valuing the environment’ as a good way to teach and model values such as care and compassion, responsibility, respect and doing your best:

We decided to look particularly at how we could embed values education into our Point Leo beach camp experience for the Year 6 students. We believed that we needed to develop both explicit classroom strategies and modelling of good behaviours and practices into our values program. Children need to have a clear conception of each of the values if they are to be capable of putting them into practice! Since our staff team was involved in planning our goals for the outdoor education camp, we decided to explore how we could then move on to expand out strategies for values education.

The cluster’s work shows how a whole school ethos and whole school planning can be instituted. As the cluster’s UAN adviser pointed out:

Research shows that when whole school planning and community-wide commitment to values education occurs, the process is more likely to be embedded into the school. Teachers and students told me that the spark for the next step came from parents on the School Council keen to see values including respect and understanding of our Indigenous heritage and culture, as part of school programs. A parent who is an artist, keen environmentalist and has lived in the Northern Territory, laid the seeds for the development of a project that has become known as the ‘Ghost nets project’. They learnt that in the Gulf Country in Northern Australia, local Indigenous people are worried about the fishing nets that entangle marine life in the warm waters off the coast. The Red Hill children have created beach artwork collages from the beach refuse that tell a story about what is there in their local area, just as Indigenous communities have told stories through outdoor art for generations.

It also shows that whole school action is achievable when a social, environmental or cultural issue, sometimes contentious, is made the focus of the school’s work.

Tellingly, one of the cluster case studies showed how students moved from talking about values to acting in ways consistent with values being promoted. The UAN adviser again noted this:

But when I asked one of the Grade 5 boys proudly wearing his school environment committee badge what he liked about being part of the group, he promptly said: ‘There’s more to life than video games you know! We have to do our best to look after nature around here!’ His first comment connected strongly with the Values for Australian Schooling, and expressed his own desire to ‘accomplish something worthy and admirable, try hard, and pursue excellence’.
Figure 2: Somers School Camp values

[Diagram showing values and their connections]

- Self
  - Getting to know (Self)
  - Independence
  - Happiness
  - Humour
  - Honesty
  - Fairness
  - Strive to achieve:
    - Do your best
    - Initiative
    - Persistence
    - Resilience
    - Courage

- Others
  - Getting to know (others)
  - Getting along
  - Friendship
  - Trustworthiness
  - Strive to Achieve:
    - Understanding
    - Consideration
    - Tolerance
    - Inclusion

- Reflection - Perspective
  - Awareness
  - Cooperation
  - Teamwork
  - Respect
  - Responsibility
  - Community Living