What’s making news in Values Education

Welcome to the fourth edition of the Values for Australian Schooling Newsletter just as Stage 1 of the Values Education Good Practice Schools (VEGPS) Project is drawing to a close, and the application, selection and establishment process for the VEGPS Project – Stage 2 has begun.

Stage 1 nearing completion

The 26 VEGPS – Stage 1 Project clusters have submitted their final reports. At a final briefing session in northern New South Wales in April cluster representatives worked with guidance from the Curriculum Corporation project team, University Associate Network (UAN) critical friends, state and territory values education contact officers and the Department of Education, Science and Training team on these reports.

Energetic debate in panel sessions, round table discussions and practical workshops focussed on what constitutes evidence of good practice in values education. Participants explored how the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools was establishing values as the core of school life. The briefing encouraged cluster coordinators to write about their practice and project outcomes in ways that would ‘speak’ to their fellow educators.

From the clusters’ work Curriculum Corporation will develop the final report for the VEGPS – Project Stage 1. The report will ‘disseminate valuable and practical information from the clusters to the broader education community to guide further uptake of good teaching practice in values education’.


Stage 2 under way

In May, all Australian schools were invited to apply to take part in the VEGPS Project – Stage 2, which is another part of the Australian Government’s Values Education programme that is funded with $29.7 million over four years (2004–2008).

Stage 2 builds on the work of Stage 1 and will focus on cluster projects that:

- integrate values education into teaching programmes in or across key learning areas and into the school mission/ethos;
- explore values education in intercultural and global contexts;
- develop explicit values education classroom practices that develop student social skills (by developing student responsibility in intercultural, local, national and global contexts and building resilience).

The 25 clusters (each of between three and ten schools) are being selected from an open application process and funded with grants ranging from $30,000 to $95,000 to implement projects and share their findings with the wider education community. The successful clusters will commence their projects in July 2006 and report on their outcomes in early 2008.
Snapshots from around the country

Let’s get a taste of what is to come in the Stage 1 final cluster reports:

**Northern Territory**

The Henbury Cluster has used TRIBES TLC® for skilling staff and connecting to the National Framework. The schools are articulating values with special displays and using focused, explicit values teaching. Values are explained in school newsletters and there has been a focus on ‘embedding values into the walk and talk of the school’.

A principal from one of the cluster schools reports: ‘We regularly shared anecdotal evidence of positive change at unit meetings or staff meetings. For example, a teacher related a story of a difficult child who during a reflection on inappropriate behaviour was able to articulate that the issue had started with his put-downs of other children. He could see that it was the way he treated others that regularly led to conflict. We could see that giving teachers and students a common language meant that fruitful discussions could lead to real changes in behaviour.’

Another of the partner schools, Wanguri Primary School, has developed a new school motto and collectively redefined their five guiding values.

**South Australia**

The Modbury Cluster in South Australia looked at some of its student and teacher outcomes from a quality teaching perspective.

Each of the six schools in this cluster has a history of commitment to explicit values education that in some cases extends back more than a decade. Individual schools have explored the values of their own communities and have grappled with the relationship between quality teaching, leadership and the enhancement of these values within their own sites. Initiatives have included the Living Values Programme; the teaching of philosophy; whole school work with Program Achieve; new approaches to pastoral care; and a values-orientation to behaviour management.

The outcomes were examined in the light of what Professor Lovat suggested at the 2005 National Values Education Forum about what might be expected from quality teaching, namely ‘intellectual depth, communicative capacity, capacity to reflect, capacity for self-management and self-knowledge’. (Professor Lovat’s full paper can be found in the resources section of the Values Education website.)

Changes in the communicative capacity of both teachers and students have been observed at the cluster schools, and include:

- Students have an increased vocabulary for talking about issues, values, needs, behaviour and the behaviour of others.
- Students are better able to negotiate resolutions to interpersonal conflicts.
- Student language is more inclusive (culturally inclusive, inclusive of students with disabilities).
- Students are more confident in asking for reasons.
- Teachers are listening more to students.
- Teachers are more often reflecting among themselves on what is working and what is not working in the school and making plans for changes.
- Teachers report that they are treating students with greater respect.

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The values education programmes in the States and Territories are focusing on professional learning and on facilitating values education school community forums. Every school across Australia has been invited to apply for Australian Government funding to conduct a forum for their school community. The following are some snapshots of what is happening.

**Victoria**

The Values Education Forums Project is running smoothly in Victoria, aided by cross-sectoral collaboration, which has created a unified and streamed approach.

Some 260 Victorian schools have now applied for grants, with more than 60 having conducted forums. Many have been able to marry values education with the review and planning processes associated with the new Victorian Essential Learning Standards.

A round of cross-sectoral briefings and professional learning activities for school leaders, teachers and regional personnel commenced in February 2006.

**Queensland**

Full-day professional learning workshops, planned for all districts, are being conducted to deepen participants’ understanding of values education and provide practical support for schools to hold forums.

A series of breakfast seminars, featuring Queensland ethicist Noel Preston, will be held at various locations around the State in the latter half of 2006.


**South Australia**

A recent seminar, ‘Why Values Education?’, raised awareness of the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools and encouraged schools to consider the values that are important to their school community. Keynote speakers included Monsignor David Cappo, Vicar-General of the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide; Ms Anne Harvey, Director of the Office of Sustainability; Mr Peter Buckskin; and Ms Helen Paphitis, principal of Salisbury High School.

A state conference will be held on 30 June, with Professor Terence Lovat and Julie Mitchell as keynote speakers, and a series of twilight seminars is planned for the remainder of 2006. See www.decs.sa.gov.au/valueseducation for details.

**Western Australia**

The Department of Education and Training (DET) has produced the Values Education – Whole School Approaches CD-ROM, which includes eight case studies highlighting examples of whole school approaches to values education. One thousand copies will be distributed free to DET schools and the CD-ROM will also be made available to the independent and Catholic sectors.

Work continues on the implementation of the values school community forums across the State in government, independent and Catholic schools. Since February 2006, more than 200 schools have registered to hold a values education forum.

**Australian Capital Territory**

During 2006 many ACT schools have been involved in a range of activities to foster embedding values education into school culture. For example, 36 government schools are committed to the use of restorative practices to ensure that schools are safe, cooperative, inclusive and tolerant learning environments. Other initiatives include social skill and resilience building programs such as Mind Matters. You Can Do It, Bounce Back and Bully Busters. See www.mawsonps.act.edu.au to learn more.

**New South Wales**

Values education in schools is now being focused in New South Wales through the National Framework, the values education school forums and the NSW Government statement on values in public schools.

The ten regions of the NSW Department of Education and Training are now enacting their values education plans by providing professional development activities highlighting the importance of values and values education in schools. This regional approach is also being used to facilitate the development of values education school forums.
National Values Education Forum – May 4–5 Canberra

More than 170 values educators attended the National Values Education Forum in Canberra. State and territory, independent and Catholic school representatives, teachers, principals, academics, parents, students and international guests came together to discuss how to build capacity in values education in our schools.

Key note addresses were presented by Dr Neil Hawkes, a former principal and district inspector from the UK and Professor Terence Lovat, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Newcastle University.

Representatives of many Values Education Good Practice Schools clusters held workshops and panel discussions to inform the forum about their work and progress to date. A full report of the National Forum will be available soon for downloading from the Values Education website.

Values for Australian Schooling Kit on its way to schools!
Funded by the Australian Government and produced by Curriculum Corporation, the Values for Australian Schooling Kit is an integrated package of professional learning resources for implementing values education. It will be distributed to all schools by mid-June. There is one kit for primary and one kit for secondary schools.

The kits contain five resources: Values for Australian Schooling Professional Learning Resources book; Engaging your school community – a resource for facilitating schools forums; Talking Values DVD, three posters, and a copy of the National Framework. The kit has been addressed to principals of schools, so keep an eye out for it and make the principal’s office your first port of call.

The print components of the kit are available for downloading from: http://www.valueseducation.edu.au/values