What’s making news in values education

Welcome to the second edition of the Values for Australian Schooling Newsletter. Inside you’ll find progress updates from around the country on the Values Education Good Practice Schools (VEGPS) Project – Stage 1. We hope the special feature on Case Writing is an incentive to record your own experiences in teaching values education.

Case Writing encourages teachers to tell stories out of school

Case Writing is a technique developed to assist teachers to reflect on their teaching by describing their practice so it can be discussed with colleagues. Case Writing is being used in a number of the VEGPS project schools as a way of capturing evidence of changed practice and as a way of fostering professional learning in values education and quality teaching.

Cases are richly detailed narratives used to guide personal reflection on teaching values as well as providing a focus for discussing professional practice in values education. Although they are ‘story-like’, cases are not simply stories that teachers tell about their work. They are crafted into compelling narratives, with a beginning, middle and ending, situated in a specific timeframe.

They have a plot that is problem-focused with some dramatic tension that must be relieved. They are embedded with many ‘problems’ that can be framed and analysed from various perspectives. They should include the thoughts and feelings of the teacher-writers.

They all include reflective comments and question what could be done differently in similar situations. These comments include the author’s answer to the question: ‘What is this a case of?’ The specific challenges, solutions, and experiences of a single case should be related to general issues and principles of learning and teaching.

Each case is discussed with a colleague or critical friend, or in conference with a specialist university colleague working with the VEGPS clusters of schools. In effect, the conference collectively articulates best practice in simple terms. Often cases stand alone as highly practical illustrations of quality values teaching and evidence of progress. Learn more at http://www.valueseducation.edu.au.

Acknowledgements: This draws heavily on the work of Lee Schulman, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and his colleagues. It also draws on the work of the PEEL Project at Monash University and in particular the work of Ian and Judie Mitchell.
The 26 VEGPS Project – Stage 1 school clusters have been teleconferencing and posting questions, photos and news on Weblogs set up to encourage communication. Clusters continue to work closely with their UAN critical friends at the crucial mid-point of the programme as they gather evidence of their good practices.

Let’s see how two clusters are getting on.

Queensland

Philosophy in the Classroom

Students and teachers in the Gold Coast North cluster are enthusiastically exploring philosophical and ethical approaches within the National Framework for Values Education.

Gayle Alessio, Cluster Coordinator at Oxenford State School, reports:

Philosophy sessions are focusing on creating a ‘Community of Inquiry’ where children examine life’s ‘big’ questions in class discussion and small group activity. Teachers from P–7 are using children’s literature to stimulate curiosity and encourage deeper thinking about concepts such as right and wrong, friendship, bullying, fairness, rights and responsibilities. Some book titles that have been used in the Junior School are John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat, The Bunyip of Berkley’s Creek, Best Friends for Francis, Where the Wild Things Are, Aesop’s Fables and The Rainbow Fish. Teachers report that students are clearly thinking for themselves, accepting responsibility for their views and showing respect for the ideas of others.

New South Wales

Catholic secondary students explore values in key learning areas

The Sense of the Sacred project is examining the integration of values education with the curriculum.

Many students have found that what they thought was obvious is not obvious to people with different perspectives. This in turn encourages tolerance and increases cooperation in working through issues.

Philosophy in the Classroom enables our school communities to hold purposeful discussions around values – this will ultimately help our students understand and apply the nine Values for Australian Schooling.

Jenny Rickard, Cluster Coordinator of the Sense of the Sacred Cluster, reports:

Quality practitioners from the five Catholic secondary schools in this cluster are using the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project to provide:

- clearly articulated values within each KLA;
- opportunities for sharing ideas and strategies;
- sample units of work and teaching strategies in values education; and
- electronic publication of materials developed, such as the posters and sample units of work.

Thirty expert KLA teachers have together identified key values and symbols in their respective KLAs. These have been incorporated into posters that will be displayed in the schools to help students, teachers, leadership teams, parents and care-givers to reflect on their own values. It is envisaged that the poster designs and all the other materials produced will be available online upon completion of the project.

Sense of the Sacred Cluster: Domremy College, Bethlehem College, Casimir Catholic College, De La Salle College and Holy Spirit College
In States and Territories

Values Education Contact Officers report on a busy program of professional development, conferences, school forums and writing of curriculum materials in values education. Contact details are available at http://www.valueseducation.edu.au.

Northern Territory

Valuing the EsseNTials is the Northern Territory project that links the NT Curriculum Framework (NTCF) to the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools. Valuing the EsseNTials includes useful advice for planning values education school forums and an extensive curriculum mapping document which links the National Framework to the NTCF. Download a copy of Valuing the EsseNTials at http://www.deet.nt.gov.au/education/values_education/index.shtml.

A series of 11 three-hour values education professional development workshops have been held for principals or school leaders in the Northern Territory. Kate Minahan, NT Values Education Contact Officer, reports that principals are positive about these sessions and appreciate that values education is integral to school business. She also says that principals see values education as part of their school’s action planning process. All feedback from the professional development sessions is being taken to the Northern Territory Values Education Co-ordinating Advisory Committee.

The next stage of professional development in the Northern Territory is aimed at teachers and will have a curriculum specific focus.

Victoria

Gary Shaw, Victorian Values Education Contact Officer, has been undertaking a series of regional briefings on values education to curriculum educators in the nine government school regions in Victoria. During October, he provided a whole-day briefings in the Goulburn North East Region in Shepparton and Wodonga.

The Association of Independent Schools in Victoria (AISV) is supporting the National Framework through a full-day professional development in values education for school leaders and principals in October 2005. This will be followed by further professional development activities for teachers in 2006.

Contact deborahmaher@ais.vic.edu.au for more information about values education.

Queensland

In January 2005 Queensland received funding to develop an inter-systemic project titled Values Education Project – Queensland to support the State’s schools in the planning for and holding of their values education school forums.

This is a joint initiative of Education Queensland, the Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland Inc. It will run until June 2008. Queensland has set up a cross-sectoral Coordinating Committee to oversee the project. Learn more at http://education.qld.gov.au/curriculum/values.

The first Queensland State Values Education Conference was held on 29 August in Brisbane. Its main aim was to raise awareness of the whole national values education initiative and to showcase different approaches and resources. Over 450 people attended and evaluation forms indicate that over 88 per cent of delegates want to attend follow up workshops to further explore values education.

A series of workshops is planned across the State and a professional learning calendar and other information is available at http://education.qld.gov.au/curriculum/values/pd_events.html.

New South Wales

A State Values Education Conference with over 80 Department of Education and Training consultants from across the State was held in September to consider issues related to values education forums. With expertise in areas including quality teaching, curriculum, student welfare and equity programmes, they worked together to develop plans to support schools at a local level. Those attending heard a presentation from one of the Values Education Good Practice schools. The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools was examined and successful values education programmes currently being implemented in schools were discussed.
National partnerships

DEST is continuing to work closely with national professional associations to promote the latest developments in values education. DEST has established values education partnerships with:

- Australian Council of Deans of Educators (ACDE);
- Australian Joint Council of Professional Teacher Associations (AJCPTA);
- Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (APAPDC);
- Australian Parents Council (APC); and
- Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO).

The partnerships will support professional associations to inform and update their members about the Values Education programme and activities over the next three years. Contact your national association to find out more information about the Values Education programme and resources.

Being Australian – links to values education

Being Australian: Australia Day Resources for Upper Primary Students has been distributed to all primary schools for Term 4. It helps children to understand values we share – a fair go, freedom, integrity, respect, responsibility, tolerance and inclusion. It also links to civics and citizenship curriculum in all States and Territories.

The Being Australian resource is designed to help students explore the themes associated with Australia Day, such as diversity, land and people, and our beliefs and values. The resource contains notes for teachers, handouts for students and a range of activities which will assist with the students’ discussion and debate of Australia Day, Australian identity and values.

The Being Australian book and other resources being developed by the National Australia Day Council are supported with funding from the Australian Government’s Values Education programme.

Australia Day Competition

This is the third year that the National Australia Day Council is presenting the Australia Day Competition for upper primary students. Entries close Friday 11 November 2005. For more information about Australia Day education resources (including The Big Australia Day Book distributed to all primary schools in January 2005) or Australia Day activities visit http://www.australiaday.gov.au.

Resources

The Values for Australian Schooling Kit 2005 (Primary/Secondary) is an integrated package of resources designed to support the development of values education in every school across the country. The resources are expected to be available online at http://www.valueseducation.edu.au shortly and distributed to all schools in Australia in time for day one Term 1 2006.

Limited copies of the Discovering Democratic Values DVD is now available free to schools. Contact your State and Territory Values Education Contact Officer to organise a copy for your school.

Further links to support values education

The National Safe School Framework (NSSF) links to values education with its aims to 'assist all school communities in building safe and supportive schools’. The NSSF provides six key elements to guide a review and planning process to enhance quality leadership within a whole school approach that is centred on student wellbeing. For more information visit http://ncab.nssfbestpractice.org.au.

MindMatters and Staff Matters are professional development programmes and resources that promote and protect the social and emotional wellbeing of members of school communities. Many of the student and staff activities in this programme could be easily adapted for use by values educators. For practical ideas and information go to http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/index.htm.

Civics and Citizenship Education (CCE) is central to Australian education and the maintenance of a strong and vital citizenship. The values in the National Framework are supported by case studies, resources, ideas, lesson plans and information for all levels of schooling on the CCE website at http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au.