Module 2: Side by Side – values education big book

Module description
Module 2 is an optional module within the PLP. Module 2 is primarily designed for teachers of students at lower primary levels who intend to use Side by Side, a values education big book. It introduces participants to the ideas of the visual and text narrative as well as the teacher notes at the back of the book. It aims to help teachers use the book in a classroom setting to enhance intercultural values.

Explicit values focus
Side by Side explores how intercultural understanding can be developed using a big book that explores a number of the nine Values for Australian Schooling, including Care and Compassion, Fair Go, Respect, and Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion.

Curriculum focus
The module is relevant to the following learning areas, as defined in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA 2008):
- English
- Health and Physical Education
- Languages
- Humanities and Social Sciences (including Civics and Citizenship).

Key understandings
Participants will develop understandings of:
- how to effectively use Side by Side and its supporting Teacher notes
- basic concepts of culture and cultural diversity within an Australian sociocultural context
- the role of values in an individual’s, family’s and/or community’s choices and behaviours
- how understanding between cultures is possible if people hold and ‘live’ by key values such as respect and tolerance.

Essential items
- Side by Side – values education big book.
- Module 1: Teaching for intercultural understanding.
- The Values Education website (www.valueseducation.edu.au), from which additional Side by Side teacher notes, the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools (DEST 2005) and Building Values Across the Whole School: Teaching and Learning Units (DEEWR 2009) can be downloaded.
- A relevant learning area curriculum document.
Getting started

Intercultural understanding involves an appreciation of cultural diversity and the common ground that all people share. The experiences and evolving relationships explored in *Side by Side* highlight neighbourliness and community connections.

Because you will be teaching students about the values associated with intercultural understanding, you need to think about how you belong to a community.

**Reflection**

If you are engaging with this module individually, use a reflective journal to explore what constitutes a community where you live or work. Is/was your selected community culturally or socially diverse? What kinds of intercultural understandings have you used/did you use to negotiate any diversity? Reflective journals are useful learning tools. You can use your journal to record, illustrate and/or challenge ideas both within the PLP and *Side by Side*.

**Social interaction**

If you are engaged in a collegiate learning activity, individually or in pairs develop a Y-chart that allows you to explore what a ‘good community’ looks, feels and sounds like. Display your charts and discuss the assumptions or values represented within the different charts.

A Y-chart allows you to think outside the square while brainstorming. Individual and/or group Y-charts typically define what something looks, sounds and feels like.

Teaching and learning using a big book

*Side by Side* is a values education big book for young Australians. It is important to understand the text and how it might be used with young children before discussing its relevance to the development of intercultural understanding.

**Reflection**

Read the illustrated story *Side by Side*. Do not read the Teacher notes at this stage, as it is important that you build your own sense of the ideas and concepts explored in the story.

**Social interaction**

If you are engaged in a collegiate learning activity, nominate one person to role-play the teacher by reading the big book to the group. Discuss how a big book can be most effectively used for teaching and learning.

**Table 2.1 Using *Side by Side* in the classroom**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenarios</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher reads from <em>Side by Side</em> and displays the</td>
<td>Whole-class engagement with <em>Side by Side</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pictures to students</td>
<td>Teacher leads with <em>Side by Side</em>. Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>leads with supporting classroom materials and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small groups share reading and text- or</td>
<td>Small groups supported by a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illustration-based tasks</td>
<td>independently rereading and/or responding to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>specific tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole class/small group/individual innovation on</td>
<td>Guided reading and writing using a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the text or text structure</td>
<td>collaboratively developed template.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reading for understanding

Reading and discussing *Side by Side* with students will enable you to introduce and scaffold a number of the nine *Values for Australian Schooling*. When you use this big book, students should be able to:

- explore basic concepts of culture and cultural diversity, as well as similarities between cultures
- explore specific ways in which culture is experienced and expressed (for example, through language, belief systems, foods, clothing, ceremony, celebration and sport)
- develop an understanding of the part values play in our choices and behaviours
- develop ways of responding to cultural difference and practising sensitivity in interactions with people from diverse cultures
- recognise that understanding between cultures is possible if people hold and ‘live’ by key values, such as respect and tolerance.

Making connections

Select one of these student objectives and through rereading the book, identify aspects of the story that would allow you to introduce and scaffold this skill development for young children.

Social interaction

If you are engaged in a collegiate learning activity, divide up the group to allow you to cover at least two, and preferably five, of the student objectives above. Begin by discussing the ideas underpinning the skill, and then turn to *Side by Side* to locate text or illustrations that reflect the skill you have selected/been allocated. The group might like to develop and use a graffiti wall to record, view and discuss ideas generated through this process. A graffiti wall is a way to collaboratively collect ideas. Put large sheets of paper on the walls on which you or your group can draw pictures or record your ideas.

Diversity in contemporary Australia

Once you understand the content and values of *Side by Side*, it is important that you link this knowledge to the theory and practice of intercultural learning.

In Module 1, you will have read that research about the development of intercultural understanding indicates that individuals do not necessarily know their own culture. ‘Cultural practices are largely invisible to us, [as] we do not usually see them as cultural and culturally constructed’ (Liddicoat, AJ, Papademetre, L, Scarino, A & Kohler, M 2003, *Report on Intercultural Language Learning*, p 24).

In its exploration of Australia’s diverse community, *Side by Side* allows you to focus not just on our differences, but also on what makes us similar.

While young students will not be able to critically analyse the narrative of *Side by Side*, as an educator you should be aware that students’ views about community and ‘Australianness’ are sociocultural constructs, and that there may be opportunities for you to explore these in an age-appropriate way with younger children.
Liddicoat, AJ et al (2003) contend that:

All learners have perceptions about their own culture which are usually to some degree stereotyped and which differ from the ‘reality’ of their own culture. That is, people do not experience their own culture directly, but rather through an interpretative framework in which aspects of the culture are mythologised. An example of such a mythology is the predominance of images of the bush in perceptions of Australian culture, in spite of very high levels of urbanisation that exists in Australia’s cultural reality.

The constructed nature of Australian identity relates directly to the idea of ‘learning about self as a cultural being’, which is the first element of Paige and Stringer’s (1997) intercultural learning model described in Module 1).

Making connections
What mythologies about the Australian identity, community and family exist in Australia? Identify some of the ways in which these sociocultural ‘myths’ are/have been perpetuated in our society. Can you identify examples with which your students may be familiar? (For example, Australian characters in favourite picture stories or cartoons.)

Active construction
To what extent do the illustrations or the story-line of Side by Side represent the sense of community held by students at your school? Which parts of the narrative might positively challenge stereotyped views of young learners about their own culture and environment?

Good practice in the early years
How and when to teach for intercultural understanding and values education in the first years of primary school will depend on a number of factors: the school’s curriculum, the readiness of students to link personal experience to abstract concepts, and your confidence in using exemplary resources.

A number of Australian schools within the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project (VEGPSP) used narratives to scaffold students’ understanding of complex and sometimes abstract values. The following extracts are drawn from the experiences of two school clusters in Stage 2 of the VEGPSP.

The power of story in values education was used (because of) the potential of narratives to provide an opportunity for empathy and wearing someone else’s shoes. … This required higher order thinking and an understanding of the feelings of others. Children were hence better able to explain things in terms that both they and the teacher understood.

Source: At the Heart of What We Do: Values Education at the Centre of Schooling, 2008 DEEWR, p 74

Story is a powerful vehicle for values education. Story gave teachers a way to engage students at the beginning of their values journey. It allowed them to hook students straight into values discussions. Introducing values in this way generated a feeling of adventure that excited children. Many students were so captivated by the story that teachers had no problem engaging them in deep values reflections right from the start.

Source: Ibid 2008, p 88
Side by Side includes teacher notes at the end of the book that offer practical guidance about how to use the big book with young children. Within these notes, a Discovering section includes discussion points for each double-page spread to enhance students’ engagement with the narrative while focusing on the values enacted in the story. This advice allows you to think about the higher-order thinking skills required to empathise with the feelings of others.

**Reflection**

If you are engaging with Module 2 individually, carefully read the Discovering section of the Teacher notes for pages 6–7. Use a reflective journal to record your thoughts about the ideas and values explored in the notes and in the pictorial and text narrative.

**Social interaction**

If you are engaged in a collegiate learning activity, nominate one person to present pages 10–11 of the story using the questions identified in the Discovering section of the Teacher notes. Following this presentation, invite two participants to role-play the conversation that takes place later between Mrs Rana and Chris.

**Focusing on intercultural learning**

Paige and Stringer’s intercultural learning model allows you to test your understanding of intercultural learning. The model can also be used to analyse the values within Side by Side. We have already seen how ‘learning about the self as a cultural being’ can be used to explore issues relating to real as opposed to ‘mythic’ identity. Using the Bringing it together section of the Teacher notes and Going further within Side by Side will allow you to explore and develop practical teaching and learning approaches that unpack each element of the model.

**Table 2.2 Paige and Stringer’s intercultural learning model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Learning about the self as a cultural being.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Learning about culture and its impact on human language, behaviour and identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Culture-general learning, focusing on universal intercultural phenomena including cultural adjustment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Culture-specific learning, with a focus on a particular language or culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Learning how to learn about language and culture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reflection**

Begin by thinking again about each aspect of the model and how they can be used to develop intercultural understanding in young children. Read the Values spotlights in Bringing it together within the Teacher notes to identify those elements of the Paige and Stringer model that can be developed using the Values spotlights.

**Social interaction**

The Going further section of the Teacher notes available from the Values Education website includes a subsection called ‘All special, all together’ that is divided into three activities. Allocate these activities within a collegiate learning activity. Each pair or group should focus on one activity. Discuss how the activity relates to the development of intercultural understanding. Share the activity and your ideas with the wider group.

Now that you have gained familiarity with *Side by Side* and its Teacher notes, you should be more confident about using it to develop intercultural understanding within teaching and learning activities.

**Social interaction**

Individually or collaboratively design lesson plans that use *Side by Side* to develop intercultural understanding as part of values education.

**Responsibility**

Having used *Side by Side* in a practical teaching and learning activity, finetune your lesson plan so that it more effectively caters for different learning styles and develops thinking skills.

**Going further**

A number of other values education resources allow you to build on the understandings reached in this module about intercultural learning and values education. They include two primary school units within *Building Values Across the Whole School: Teaching and Learning Units* (DEEWR 2009): ‘You, Me, Us’ and ‘The big, Big, BIG book’.

**Reflection**

If you have not already used these units, explore how they might support your class use of *Side by Side*.