

The values journey at Yarrawonga Secondary College

In 2005 Yarrawonga Secondary College (YSC) underwent substantial changes to the leadership structure with the appointment of a new Principal Class team. During this time it became evident that the College needed a clear direction, vision and common focus. Hence, the following story...

In 2006 YSC began by asking staff, students and school council members to respond to a range of questions about the school that reflected on such things as, what is good teaching, and the expectations of teachers and students. Staff responded eagerly as it was an opportunity to have their say and provide input into an important aspect of their teaching. Year 12 students were also surveyed on issues, such as, what makes a good teacher and a good classroom. (See Appendix 1: Reflection Sets 1, 2, 3 & 4; Appendix 2 – Year 12 Survey)

Responses were collated and we engaged the services of an outside facilitator to run a whole day and whole school (teaching & SSO staff) Professional learning day focusing on setting our vision, values, mission for staff and aims for students, using the responses already gained from staff. (See Appendix 3: Visioning Workshop with whole staff)

Initial ideas were gained from all staff and these were then collated and crafted into initial statements. These statements (aims, mission and values) were then presented back to staff in a staff meeting and were discussed in small groups. Staff provided feedback about the statements and offered suggestions for 're-crafting' these. A couple of staff then worked on this feedback to produce our current aims, mission and values. These were then publicised widely in the newsletter to parents, to staff at meetings, and in discussions with the school community. (Appendix 4: Current Aims, Mission and Values Statement)

The school applied for a values grant to assist in embedding our values at the College.

The aims, mission and values were used to decide on priorities for the College in regard to professional learning for staff and programs that would develop and help to meet these statements. For example, in order to meet the following statements:

- *Students who demonstrate respect, compassion, honesty and tolerance of others*
- *Socially responsible students who contribute positively to the community*
- *An ethos of respect, tolerance, compassion and acknowledgement of success*
- *A safe environment based on the principles of restorative justice*

The College adopted Restorative Practice as the means by which student support and management is to be handled. Staff are to be held accountable to our aims, mission and values. We will strive to do fewer things better and to align all teaching, learning and activity to our school aims, values and mission.

A competition was held to come up with a new motto for the College. Suggestions were sought from staff, students and parents. A list of possible mottos was compiled and then staff, students, parents and school council were invited to vote. The motto 'learn today, lead tomorrow' was voted the College favourite. The new motto was then incorporated into our existing logo. (Appendix 5 – New logo)

In order to familiarise staff with the aims, mission and values and help them start to 'live' them the Assistant Principal developed bookmarks for all staff to use in their diaries. (*Appendix 6 – Values bookmark*)

To assist students in becoming familiar with the school values a caricaturist from Melbourne was employed for a day to work with a group of students on developing a values poster. The artist worked with the students to develop what the values looked like at YSC and then drew caricatures depicting these. The art teacher and the students worked on the artwork to get it to a state that it could be scanned and used in software packages.

As a starting point the Assistant Principal developed some posters depicting each of the values and displayed these in the staffroom. The art teacher made a display of the caricature process and the values in a corridor. This stimulated a great deal of discussion and interest from students, staff and parents.

A printing company was employed to develop a poster for each of the values using the caricatures. They also used the caricatures to develop the front cover of the student planner. Posters are now displayed in every classroom and office area and students and staff can now name all of the values. (*Appendix 7 – sample poster*)

A values education program is being developed to run as part of the pastoral care sessions. Staff and students will be exploring each of the values and what they mean to them at YSC. These will then be collated to form 'value actions' at each year level.
(*Appendix 8 – Values session for pastoral care*)

The year level coordinators use the values as the backbone to every conversation that they have with students, and other staff are starting to do this more often. In terms of values, we have achieved a common focus and approach and values language. Nearly all staff and students now understand and refer to our school values daily.

Appendix 1: Reflection Sets

Yarrowonga Secondary College – Setting our Vision!

The upcoming PD day will focus on setting a vision for our College. This vision will encompass aims for students and a mission statement for the school, together with an agreed set of core values.

This visionary guiding framework will be the forward-looking philosophy of the school which will serve to stimulate, guide and focus the work of the school as a learning organization. It will act as a magnet that draws staff and stakeholders together to understand and achieve a common purpose.

As a starting point we need to reflect on various aspects of our College and envisage what these will look like.

Over the course of the next few weeks, we will pose a number of questions and reflections and will collate these to form the starting point for setting the vision and mission statement of the College.

Reflection Set 1

1. Think about one of **your** favourite teachers when you were at school. What are the qualities that you admired most about this teacher?
(e.g. had a good relationship with students, was organized, sense of humour, really new their stuff,...)
2. What made his/her classroom a place that you wanted to be?
(e.g. the lessons were fun and interesting, we felt valued by the teacher,...)
3. Describe **your** ideal class or lesson at YSC.
(e.g. all my students were totally focused and on task at all times, all students understand and are able to complete set tasks, great discussions take place, students ask relevant and important questions, students enjoy the class,...)

Reflection Set 2

1. How would you like to be treated by staff, student and other community members?
(e.g. with respect, as a professional, spoken to in a calm and rational manner, thanked and appreciated for my efforts,)
2. If your son/daughter enrolled at YSC, how would you expect him/her to be treated? How would you expect him/her to be spoken to by staff?
(e.g. Treated fairly and consistently, calmly, with respect, treated as a young adult, given responsibility,...)
3. What is important to you as a staff member in order to feel valued and an integral part of the school?
(e.g. treated with respect by all staff, efforts are appreciated, involved in decision making, responsible for my own classes and students, respected by staff and students,.....)

Reflection Set 3

1. What are the qualities as learners that you would like students to gain throughout their education at YSC?
(e.g. independent learners, life-long learners, love of learning, motivated, self challenging,.....)

2. What standards of student achievement and progress would you like students to achieve in their time at YSC?
(e.g. high level literacy and numeracy levels, excellent academic results (VCE, AIM, VELs),...)
3. What personal attributes would you like students to develop in their time at YSC?
(e.g. respect for others, empathy, high self esteem, honesty, integrity,)
4. What is your vision for the way in which students would approach their learning? Describe.
(e.g. students would have a love of learning, be highly motivated, seek help from staff, show respect for staff and students in the classroom, achieve highly,.....)

Reflection Set 4

Under the three goals in the Annual Implementation Plan, describe what you want YSC to look like in 4 years time.....

1. Goal 1 – Student Learning
(e.g. for students to be fully engaged in their learning, to be striving to achieve at a high level, increased VET and VCAL opportunities, links to University and TAFE, increased opportunities for additional qualifications, certificates, experiences; high level literacy and numeracy, technologically equipped for the 21st century,.....)
2. Goal 2 – Student Engagement and Well-being
(e.g. to decrease absence rates, engaged and motivated students, increased student leadership opportunities, empathetic, caring students, respectful of others, getting along with everyone, agreed core values that are fully embraced by all, no child will fear bullying, students who take responsibility for their own actions in a mature way,)
3. Goal 3 – Student Pathways and Transitions
(e.g. seamless transition at all levels, P-12 school, open learning opportunities, ability to access TAFE and University courses at school, increased partnerships with employers, real managed individual pathways plans that are student driven,)

What are your ideas for a school 'motto' or 'vision statement'?

Appendix 2 – Year 12 Survey – Effective teachers and classrooms

No. of students completing survey	
All are effective teachers	
Most are effective teachers	
Some are effective teachers	
This school does not have any teachers that are effective	

1. What are the qualities that successful and effective teachers possess?
2. What are the things that are required to have an effective classroom?
3. Describe your ideal lesson...

Appendix 3 – Visioning Workshop with whole staff

'Visioning' workshop for Yarrawonga Secondary College - 8th September 2006

Room laid out in 'cabaret-style'

Data projector and screen set up

Whiteboard or flipchart

Plenty of 'post-its' and 3 large sheets of butcher's paper (or similar) per group

Workshop objectives

By the end of the workshop participants will be able to:

- use the TLO Learning System and Strategic Diamond to support learning at Yarrawonga Secondary College
- generate future-based aims for their students
- describe how the school needs to be in order to achieve agreed student aims
- appreciate the power of a collective visionary guiding framework which acts as a lens through which all decisions are explored
- Articulate a shared set of values for the school community

Proposed timetable

8.30 Group facilitators briefing with JM (6 facilitators for groups of 7/8)
(*Suggest you give consideration to a seating plan.*)

8.45 Refreshments

9.00 Session 1 Yarrawonga Secondary College – a Learning School

- A Learning System for a Learning School
- Scanning the future environment using a STEEEP analysis
- Generating future aims for students (the Strategic Diamond – above the line)

11.00 Break

11.30 Session 2 Establishing the school's mission (the Strategic Diamond – below the line)

- A school vision statement/motto – the challenge
- Agreeing to a set of value statements which will permeate all actions within our school community

1.00 The next steps – a description of actions to follow

1.15 Lunchbreak

Note: it may be useful to have the following nearby as reference materials e.g. any current values statements, strategic statements, phrases from parent handbook, overview copy of Blueprint Strategies including POLT, VELs, P@D culture, self evaluation, and school trends in student results etc to support/validate discussions if required.

Participants please bring copies of the four 'pre-workshop reflections' and 'pre-workshop thinking' around the paper on values.

Appendix 4 – Current Aims, Mission and Values Statement

Yarrowonga Secondary College Aims, Mission Statement and Values

YSC promotes high achievement by developing the learning capacities of every student, enabling them to be:

- Motivated, lifelong learners, striving to achieve excellence
- Students who demonstrate respect, compassion, honesty and tolerance of others
- Innovative and resilient learners who can adapt in a rapidly advancing world
- Competent in the fundamental skills of literacy and numeracy
- Socially responsible students who contribute positively to the community

Staff will assist students to succeed by providing:

- A broad, challenging and authentic learning environment
- An ethos of respect, tolerance, compassion and acknowledgement of success
- An setting that values diverse skills in an innovative, positive and enthusiastic teaching environment
- A rich and varied range of learning resources that facilitate success
- A supportive framework focused on mentoring and coaching through teamwork
- A safe environment based on the principles of restorative justice.
- Quality opportunities for each student to develop a range of leadership capabilities

Values

- **Achievement** – striving to do our best, reaching our goals and celebrating our successes
- **Harmony** – acknowledging and valuing individual differences and actively contributing towards a safe and caring environment
- **Responsibility** – taking ownership of our behaviour and actions and setting a positive example to others
- **Cooperation** – working together, communicating effectively and supporting each other in a positive manner
- **Respect** – maintaining integrity by being honest and courteous at all times and acknowledging the beliefs and rights of others

Appendix 5 – New logo



Appendix 6 – Values bookmark



Values

Achievement – striving to do our best, reaching our goals and celebrating our successes

Harmony – acknowledging and valuing individual differences and actively contributing towards a safe and caring environment

Responsibility – taking ownership of our behaviour and actions and setting a positive example to others

Cooperation – working together, communicating effectively and supporting each other in a positive manner

Respect – maintaining integrity by being honest and courteous at all times and acknowledging the beliefs and rights of others

Restorative Questions

What happened?

What were you thinking at the time?

What have you thought about since?

Who do you think has been affected by what you did?

Affected in what way?

What do you need to do to make things right?

How can we make sure this doesn't happen again?

What can I do to help you?



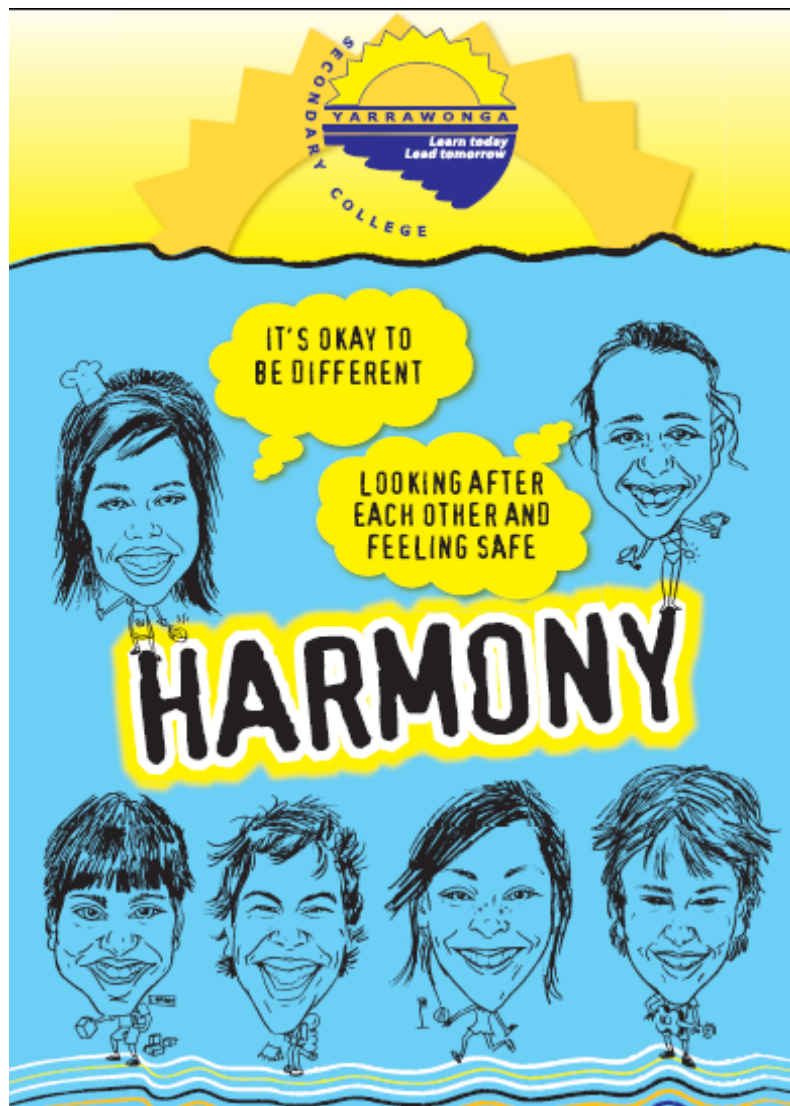
Aims for Students

- * Motivated, lifelong learners, striving to achieve excellence
- * Students who demonstrate respect, compassion, honesty and tolerance of others
- * Innovative and resilient learners who can adapt in a rapidly advancing world
- * Competent in the fundamental skills of literacy and numeracy
- * Socially responsible students who contribute positively to the community

Mission for Staff

- * A broad, challenging and authentic learning environment
- * An ethos of respect, tolerance, compassion and acknowledgement of success
- * A setting that values diverse skills in an innovative, positive and enthusiastic teaching environment
- * A rich and varied range of learning resources that facilitate success
- * A supportive framework focused on mentoring and coaching through teamwork
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- * Quality opportunities for each student to develop a range of leadership capabilities

Appendix 7 – sample poster



Appendix 8 – Values session for pastoral care

Pastoral Care Session: Values

The aim of this session is for students to explore the five values and develop an understanding of what the values mean to them at school.

1. Ask students to identify the five values (Hands up)
2. As a group complete a Y-chart for Achievement on the board (see attached Y-chart with suggestions to assist you)
3. Divide class into 4 groups.
4. Assign one of each of the remaining four values to each group. Provide them with the Y-chart for that value, a copy of the poster for that value, and a description of what the value means.
5. Make clear that their responses will be collected at the end and used by the Year Level Coordinators to develop a values 'description' that is specific and relevant to each year level or sub-school. This will be used in a later pastoral care session.
6. Ask each group to assign the roles of scribe & reporter (to report back to the group).
7. Each group needs to complete the y-chart. Allow 15 minutes for this.
8. The reporter from each group then needs to report back to the group.
9. Collect each completed Y-chart and place in the Pastoral Care Folder.
10. Return the folder to the HG drawer.

Teacher information:

The College has developed our five values through input from staff, students, parents and school council members.

The five Yarrawonga Secondary College values are:

- **Achievement** – striving to do our best, reaching our goals and celebrating our successes
- **Harmony** – acknowledging and valuing individual differences and actively contributing towards a safe and caring environment
- **Responsibility** – taking ownership of our behaviour and actions and setting a positive example to others
- **Cooperation** – working together, communicating effectively and supporting each other in a positive manner
- **Respect** – maintaining integrity by being honest and courteous at all times and acknowledging the beliefs and rights of others

Using a Y-chart

In the **looks like** section, students list the things that they would actually see in relation to the value. e.g. Harmony they may see people getting along, no fights or arguments, looking out for each other, helping a friend in need, etc

In the **sounds like** section, students record some of the things they would hear in a harmonious school, e.g. 'can I help you', 'are you ok?', 'I can see your point of view', etc

In the **feels like** section, students record what it would feel like to be in a school that valued harmony, e.g. safe, comfortable, able to express opinions, no bullying, etc