

## MURTOA COLLEGE, VICTORIA

Murtoa Secondary College is a rural school in Victoria's central western region and the whole school community has been involved in creating a values education poster and brochures that represent the values of the college.

### *The values education journey Murtoa College have undertaken so far*

In 2004, Ian Martin, Murtoa College Principal, initiated our discussion about values in response to the national debate which included the claim by Prime Minister John Howard that government schools were 'valueless'.

Realising we needed to formalise our approach to values education, Ian asked parents, students and staff to complete a survey, identifying the 12 values they considered to be most important in fostering a safe, supportive environment at Murtoa College. The results were collated, identifying the 12 most popular values.

The 12 values are (in no particular order):

- tolerance
- courtesy
- caring
- perseverance
- consideration
- truthfulness
- respecting rules
- co-operation
- trustworthiness
- commitment
- self-confidence
- friendliness.

In 2005 the 12 values were represented in professionally printed posters.

### *Stages of engagement*

**Values Education Forum** – The goal was to provide the students, parents and staff of Murtoa College with a focus upon which the school's Welfare and Discipline Policy could be based. The values clearly reflect how all in the school community should treat each other, and create a shift in our focus, from rules-based to values-based.

**Organisation** – The process was largely 'driven' by the Engaging Boys Professional Learning Team, who recognised the importance of a safe, supportive learning environment as crucial if our students are to achieve their potential. We attempted to ensure students, staff and parents were consulted/involved as much as possible, which meant the process was a lengthy one. But the ownership aspect was important to us.

**Publicity** – The school community has been kept abreast of our progress via the school newsletter, and local media were invited to the launch of the poster/brochure.

**Engaging Parents** – Parents were involved in the initial survey process and have been kept informed of our progress. The poster and brochure appear to have become an instantly recognisable and very positive ‘selling point’ for Murtoa College as they highlight our commitment to fostering a safe, supportive learning environment.

### ***Student engagement***

Middle Years classes worked in partnership with their teachers to create ‘Y Charts’ which identify the type of environment we believe will enable all to achieve their best.

Students/staff also developed a set of ‘Steps’ which are the consequences should someone behave in a manner that is not conducive to effective learning. This process was facilitated by Mr Karl Schier, Student Wellbeing Coordinator for the Grampians Region from the Department of Education and Training, Victoria. Copies of all material produced were distributed to students, staff and parents, ensuring the entire cohort of Middle Years students has a shared understanding of our expectations as a learning community.

In the mean time Year 7 Health classes addressed the issue of bullying and created a definition and Y Chart which was used in the brochure. The Year 7s also designed *We don’t do that here!* posters to highlight unacceptable behaviours. These posters were then completed in Graphics classes. Some were selected for use when making *Bullying* brochures and all are being used for displays.

The *Creating a Positive School Culture* brochure was also produced, linking the 12 values with bullying and highlighting the positive outcomes to be achieved from ‘living’ the values. The cover design is the same as the poster. Input was obtained from a range of people including students, School Council, educational consultant Ian Lillico and Genee Marks, our Critical Friend from the University of Ballarat.

The official launch of the values poster and brochures was at a whole school assembly. Six students (including school captains) and six community members each spoke about one of the values and what it means to them. The focus of their speeches is outlined alongside the photographs taken at the school assembly.

Murtoa College values posters are displayed in all classrooms and in local Murtoa businesses. Brochures have been distributed to parents, staff and students and our newsletter has been redesigned to incorporate the 12 values.

The *Bullying* Brochure has become a ‘living document’. It is used by Level/Welfare Coordinators as a reference point when behaviours inconsistent with our values are evident. Students are also able to use the Y Charts to identify unacceptable behaviours (either as a perpetrator or a victim).

### ***In progress – 2005 and beyond***

Activities in 2005 include:

Creation of a ‘Reflective Walk’, a visual representation of the 12 values in the school grounds, which will encourage reflection and ensure the values remain in our

consciousness. These will be designed and created by students requiring them to further articulate what each values means to them. On completion, we will celebrate with an official 'opening', yet to be planned in detail.

Update of school policies, including Bullying Policy and Student Wellbeing Policy, to ensure alignment with key values.

Development of 'Boy Story', a program for boys, facilitated by author Scot Gardner and Grampians Region Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Karl Schier. Scot and Karl will work with Murtoa College Student Welfare Coordinators and boys in the Middle Years on a range of issues, including tolerance, self-confidence, respecting rules and caring, our school's core values.

### ***Challenges and successes on the values education journey***

**Challenges** – Embedding the values into the school culture so that they become second nature to all of us.

**Successes** – The values are becoming part of our dialogue and as we focus our attention on 'catching students doing things right' (rather than only reprimanding them for their poor behaviour), our culture is becoming much more positive.