For the National Values Education Forum, Melbourne, April 2004

Values Education in Action

Case Studies from 12 Values Education Schools
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Foreword

Parents are increasingly concerned to know who is teaching their children and what they are being taught. Kids being able to read, write, count and communicate when they leave school have always been priorities. But increasingly, as parents we are concerned to know education is being delivered within a values-based framework with which we feel comfortable.

We need to make values education a core part of all schooling. This has been a priority of mine since I became Minister for Education, Science and Training. I commissioned a national Values Education Study in July 2002 and was honoured to release the study report at the Youth Off the Streets conference in Sydney in November 2003.

The report makes fascinating reading. It shows that many schools – government and non-government – are doing good work in values education. It also shows that comprehensive values education is still at an early stage in Australian schools. Participating schools reported ‘an increased willingness and capacity to address values and values education in a much more explicit way or, at the very least, raised awareness of the need to do so’.

Some schools reviewed their values education processes so they could develop a whole school set of values and made efforts to ensure greater levels of congruence between the values the school espoused, and the values exhibited in day-to-day practice. Some schools focused on a range of what might be called student ‘coping strategies’, or self-management qualities including personal responsibility and self-discipline, community participation and overall confidence and self-esteem (strengthening student resilience). Some schools sought to develop one or more quite specific values both in the curriculum and in the behaviours of members of their school community.

Following publication of the Values Education Study, 12 of the study schools were asked to write up more detailed case studies, four focusing on school ethos, four on student resilience and four on teaching values in the school curriculum. In the first instance, this was to facilitate discussion at the national values education forum in Melbourne on 28-29 April 2004. I commend the 12 schools which have taken part in this additional phase of the project. Their stories will be of interest to schools across Australia.

Comprehensive explicit values education will be as central to schooling as is transferring a thirst for learning. We all love talent, but in the end it is character that counts.

BRENDAN NELSON
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Ms Kathryn Netherwood and Dr Laura Stocker, Lance Holt School, WA
Ms Lou Single and Ms Katie Stitt, Matthew Hogan School, NSW
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Ms Helen Paphitis, Ms Karen Fitzpatrick and Ms Anne Prime, Salisbury High School, SA
Mr Brian Hanley and Mr Shannon Donahoo, St Monica’s College, Vic

The photographs that appear on the title page for each school and the cover are courtesy of the schools.
Overview of the case studies

The Values Education Study

On 19 July 2002, with the unanimous support of the State and Territory Ministers at the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), the Commonwealth Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Brendan Nelson MP, commissioned a values education study which included a major schools’ grants programme.

The study, known as the *Values Education Study*, was funded with over $580,000 from the Australian Government and managed by Curriculum Corporation. It was designed to:

- enable schools to develop and demonstrate current practice in values education;
- provide an informed basis for promoting improved values education in Australian schools; and
- make recommendations on a set of principles and a framework for improved values education in Australian schools.

The study took the form of a qualitative investigation with the following three interrelated components.

**Component 1: A literature search**

This provided:

- a review and study of relevant policy documents, studies, reports and initiatives in all State and Territory, Catholic and Independent school systems to capture a detailed overview of current Australian school system approaches to values education;
- a review and study of current education research pertaining to the theory and practice of values education in Australian schools;
- a review and study of relevant overseas practice and experience in values education as well as overseas research on the theory and practice of values education. In particular, this review looked at comparative research and programme implementation from England and the United States, and other countries of relevance to the Australian context.

**Component 2: Research to determine parent, teacher and student views on the values the community expects Australian schools to foster**

More specifically, Curriculum Corporation convened focus groups in a number of States and Territories at selected grant schools, and used a range of networks – especially the *Discovering Democracy, National School Drug Education Strategy, MindMatters, Asian studies and career education networks* – to identify 40 non-grant school communities to participate in a password-protected online survey of parents, teachers and students.
Component 3: Action research with a range of schools across Australia funded with grants to develop and demonstrate good practice in values education

The action research grants of up to $7000 per school, and $14 000 to $21 000 for school clusters, enabled schools to develop, demonstrate and then document what they are doing to support community values and provide effective values education to students.

Sixty-nine schools – from all States and Territories, and representing primary and secondary, government and non-government, urban, rural and remote schools – were selected to receive grants. Some of these grant schools worked in clusters; others operated on their own.

Some sample stories

Twelve of these schools have been selected as case studies to inform the deliberations of the Values Education Forum in Melbourne on 28 and 29 April 2004, and to provide food for thought for other schools.

As with the project as a whole, the schools whose stories are told in this book are drawn from the full range of school sectors and levels, all across Australia as summarised below:

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<th>School</th>
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While each of the stories is unique, they all provide a snapshot of activities undertaken by the school through the *Values Education Study*, and an outline of what has happened since. They also include specific information on actions that worked at the school level to improve values education in the school, along with advice on some pitfalls to avoid.

The twelve stories have been grouped according to the key categories of values education activity identified through the study as a whole, and its 69 project schools. These categories are outlined in the Vision Statement of *A Draft National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools*:

- examining, in consultation with their community, the school’s mission or ethos;
- developing student civic and social skills and building resilience; and
- ensuring that values are incorporated into teaching programmes across the key learning areas.

This is designed to indicate the major focus of school activity in relation to values education, without intending to suggest that it is all the school did. After all, one of the clearest messages to emerge from the *Values Education Study* as a whole is that once you start down the values education track, the paths open up for integration of existing activities and efforts to work across each of these three domains.

Theme 1:
Examining, in consultation with their community, the school’s ethos/mission

Enacting our values at The Don
The Don College, Tasmania

Values and faith at St Monica’s College
St Monica’s College, Victoria

Valuing relationships at Salisbury High
Salisbury High School, South Australia

Common educational values at Cabramatta High
Cabramatta High School, New South Wales
The Don College

Enacting our values
Enacting our values at The Don

The Don College, nestled in a peaceful bush reserve five minutes from Devonport in Tasmania, provides 900 students in Years 11, 12 and 13 with an educational programme designed to enable them to learn to:

- relate, participate and care;
- live full, healthy lives;
- create purposeful futures;
- act ethically;
- learn; and
- think, know and understand.

Having long offered an array of curricular and extracurricular activities with a strong values base, the school felt it was time to ensure that the values it enacts are both explicit and agreed across the school community. More specifically, it was keen to ensure that the range of values-based initiatives in place, such as the school environment and social justice club and various civics and citizenship programmes, were not just ad hoc arrangements, but rather part of a cohesive, coordinated approach. In other words, as the school itself has explained, ‘to be fully aware of all of the parts to the puzzle … [with] the aim of putting the pieces together into a meaningful picture’.

This was especially important in an environment where many parents found the task of teaching values to their teenagers difficult, and hence either ignored it or adopted a dogmatic approach, and where traditional values were seen as under threat. On the other side of the coin, as the school explains, teenagers also were ‘uneasy because they were told by society to think for themselves yet when they did they clashed with parents who wanted them to comply with family beliefs purely because the family expected it’. As a result, some teachers ‘felt caught in the middle and, therefore, often hesitant in how to deal with values issues’.

Simply put, the school felt it needed a more consistent and coherent approach to values education because:

- we are living at a time when values are continually being questioned and seen as relative rather than universal;
- the college needs to reinforce the values it holds;
- students need values to enable them to interact, set goals and self-assess;
- values are needed to moderate individual behaviour and provide a base from which to determine the meaning of life; and
- values can help us adapt to the complex cultural conditions we face.

The place to start

The starting point for the exercise was, in this context, to map the values that the school implicitly practises through its various curricular and extracurricular programmes and develop an agreed statement of values for the school. This in turn would enable the school to formulate and implement a values education framework to ensure that the values enacted reflect the values that are espoused.

Such an exercise would also, the school believed, respond to the growing awareness in their community that the influence of family on values formation has been reduced over recent years (in part due to peer
Values Education in Action

Sitting behind this whole process was the school’s belief that:

- values education, both formal and informal, is an integral part of any curriculum;
- teaching is not a values-free exercise;
- values education works best when modelled;
- there needs to be clarity about the values implicit in the processes and practices of the school; and
- it is necessary to embed values education into the school’s infrastructure for it to be truly effective.

**Mapping the terrain**

The mapping exercise conducted by the school focused on three areas of school activity: the school’s informal (or extracurricular) programme, formal curriculum themes and student support.

Each theme was discussed in depth by forums and focus groups of staff, parents and students to ensure that all sectors of the school community were fully involved, and that all helped to shape the agreed statement of values developed by the school.

Analysis of more than 100 extracurricular activities during 2002, for instance, revealed an attempt by the school to promote such values and practices as fair play, community responsibility, tolerance, excellence and personal goal setting, and demonstrated a more consistently held values system than the school had thought existed.

Some of the flavour of the activities explored, along with the values and supporting behaviours they encouraged, can be seen in the following examples from the school’s final map.

- An evening of excellence with a past student undertaking a PhD was assessed as promoting the values of personal excellence – goal setting; sense of community through sharing successes and acknowledging a former student who has succeeded; self-esteem, confidence and awareness; and creativity, flexibility and enterprise.

- The Devonport Lions Youth of the Year Competition was seen as contributing to a sense of community – honesty, trust, respect for all and accepting challenges, along with some of the same values and qualities as the evening of excellence inspired.

- A number of Discovering Democracy forums promoted the values implicit in a democratic society, including tolerance and a valuing of diversity, while also contributing to greater knowledge of our past and pride in who we are.

- A variety of sporting events encouraged students’ sense of fair play – competition, trust, reliability and commitment; personal excellence; and goal setting – sense of purpose, focus and achievement.

Discussion of these and other activities revealed, for the first time in many cases, the values that the school implicitly promotes, and established the basis for more formal discussions on an overt statement of values for the school. In that sense it was, to use the school’s own words, ‘a necessary first step’, which resulted in greater awareness throughout the school community ‘of values and how they can be transferred’.

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group and mass media influence) and that young people are more confused today about issues of right and wrong. With both parents and teachers alike observing that many young people seem to be becoming more cynical, bored and apathetic, the school was, in effect, accepting responsibility for helping to clarify, articulate and promote a set of values that would provide a more solid social base for student learning and personal growth.
It also provided a basis on which the school can now annually audit its approach to values education and, over time, clearly identify where values are being reinforced and embedded, and, alternatively, where gaps might exist.

The Don College is sufficiently sure of the success of the initial approach to recommend that other schools:

- undertake a values education mapping exercise within the school community to gain an understanding of what is occurring and where it is occurring; and
- hold conversations within the school community to come to an understanding of what values are and of what constitutes values education.

Beyond this, the school has used the outcome of its mapping to begin to provide appropriate values education programmes and processes, and to set in train processes to ensure a sustainable values education approach.

**Stated values and beliefs**

As a government school in Tasmania, The Don was clearly influenced by the development of a values and purposes statement by the Tasmanian Education Department and subsequent consultation on it; with the result that the local school statement inevitably reflects the proposed core values of ‘connectedness, resilience, achievement, creativity, integrity, responsibility and equity’.

The Beliefs and Values Statement developed by the school from its mapping exercise reads:

- Life at college is different from high school. One of the main reasons is that we deal with an older age group. There are few rules and students are guided towards self-discipline. An attendance check is taken every lesson, although students are free to organise their own programme when not in class. The college community enjoys many rights, including the right to learn, be respected, be heard, be safe, have personal freedom and responsibility and to have personal property to be respected. No-one, however, can enjoy rights without due responsibility and at college we mutually encourage and support responsible behaviour as a means of enjoying our rights.

- Our Code of Behaviour emphasises respect for ourselves and others and focuses on:
  - Expectations – class attendance, explanation of absence, completion of assignments;
  - Communication – which shows respectful behaviour for each other;
  - Learning – ways of showing respect for the right to learn;
  - Movement – the right to move around the college comfortably and safely;
  - Safety – showing we are responsible for our own safety and the safety of others;
  - Settling disputes – in a manner which makes the college a peaceful place;
  - Care of the environment – respect for the college environment and others’ property.

Enrolment at the school requires ‘a genuine commitment’ from the students to these values and responsibilities, and hence to the overall ethos of the school.
Identifying the way forward

The mapping exercise undertaken revealed the following key considerations that the school felt it needed to address as it moved forward in developing a more sophisticated values education approach.

- **Whether the focus should be on the institution or the individual**
  In the first instance, the school focused on seeing the ‘big picture’ by mapping the values embedded within its programmes and activities and developing a shared perspective on values to pursue. During 2004, however, the school has extended its study into a focus on the individual and this will continue over the next two years.

- **The intensive resources required to do a good job**
  Successful implementation of values education in schools requires a whole community response, which takes both people and time. The school’s broad, consultative approach worked well because it involved parents, students and staff, both collaboratively and independently, to share the project load.

- **Obtaining, measuring and conveying results to a large audience**
  This is, the school acknowledges, a difficult area, which it sought to address by releasing a report on its work, publishing articles in college community media and discussing values education at various forums. ‘We use all aspects of the college community network to seek and spread information.’

- **Recognising that values education can be a very political area**
  ‘This has’, the school explains, ‘to be at the forefront of your considerations and our study certainly took into account the political spectrum that made up our community.’

- **Accepting that often programmes can fail because those closest to them have lacked ownership of the process**
  This is a real concern in any domain. For this reason the school ran many inclusive forums and workshops for parents, students and staff, who, together, constitute the core constituencies of the school.

As a result of the *Values Education Study* project undertaken by the school, and the various forums, focus groups and document analyses undertaken, the school community has collectively tackled these issues and developed a *Way Forward* document for 2004–05, which will guide activity in relation to values education at The Don.

Broadening the focus

The series of facilitated staff forums undertaken as part of the school’s mapping exercise, where teachers examined the values they implicitly and explicitly impart, provided the starting point for discussions of teaching methodologies appropriate to values education in the school. Such discussions have, in particular, led teachers to the view that, as much as anything else, values education is about ‘relationships in society and reinforces a sense of community … Values allow decisions to be made in an informed manner’.
This realisation has in turn affected the nature and focus of the college Way Forward document for the next two years. In particular, student learning, relationships, behaviour, attendance and attitudes have been identified as themes for 2004, with special emphasis on student attendance and retention to improve educational outcomes.

Consistent with this approach, teachers now acknowledge that:

- ‘students bring to their learning different values, and this impacts on how they learn and engage’;
- and
- ‘teachers need to model the behaviours we expect of our youth … [since] modelling adults is a key way of conveying values’.

All subject areas in the college have now identified key values for their areas and will constantly review their practice in light of these.

### A values-driven learning community

The Values Education Study project undertaken by The Don College has convinced the school that values education and understanding are ‘fundamental to the successful and harmonious functioning of a community’. The issue is ‘how you undertake values education, which values should be taught, who should teach values and who decides?’

The way forward identified by the school in this context is to develop and enhance what it calls a values-driven learning community over the next two years. As the school explains it, ‘values make us who we are and are our primary source of motivation. Therefore, a successful learning community must expect to be values driven if it is to engage all members of that community. The college community’s intention is … to continue to enhance its ethos and values education processes’.

To achieve this, the college will seek to foster local processes that:

- emphasise learning as a lifelong activity;
- engage the community in collective goal setting on the way forward;
- establish an ongoing, inclusive student support network;
- involve all stakeholders as active members of the learning community;
- model a social justice approach to community;
- ensure that agreed college values inform community partnerships; and
- embed the agreed values across the curriculum.

It will, it believes, know it has succeeded when college ethos and practices:

- acknowledge the value of personal self-esteem and group commitment;
- acknowledge the value of individuality;
- demonstrate awareness and acceptance of the needs and functions of others;
- acknowledge the positive gains from empowerment of others;
- understand that safety and security are prerequisites for any community;
- understand that friendship and a sense of belonging are critical; and
- recognise that a sense of fun is positive too.
At a more immediate level, the college is in the process of implementing a number of major threads from the 2003 Tasmanian Education Department Corporate Report, which demonstrate a strong values education perspective and are consistent with its ‘way forward’ approach. The main ones include:

- political studies and civics education programmes, which were identified as a whole college activity;
- integration of Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum as a whole college approach, including celebrating Indigenous events and specific purpose weeks; teaching Indigenous education as a separate, identifiable unit or module; and using Indigenous community members to support curriculum activities;
- integration of multicultural perspectives within the curriculum, including celebrating multicultural events and weeks; addressing multicultural education as part of defined studies in the college such as English, Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE), Tourism, Catering and Languages; and using community members to support curriculum activities; and
- professional development for staff on a range of equity issues such as gender (alleviating harassment); disability (providing access and appropriate processes); acceptance (racism and sexuality); and mental health of both students and staff.

Together, these programmes and activities are seen as important contributors to the ongoing efforts of the college to promote the core values of ‘tolerance, acceptance, awareness, respect, appreciation, supportiveness and understanding’; and all add positively to the college community ethos as outlined in its statement of values and beliefs.

**Valuable lessons learned**

The ‘way forward’ for The Don College inevitably reflects the lessons it learned through the mapping project it undertook to really kick-start values education in the school. Members of the college community have reflected on their whole experience to offer advice to others about to embark on this path. The following is ‘a list of statements we, as a college community, offer as fundamental to an understanding of our values education ethos … [They] form the planks within the platform which this community sees as basic to the growth of its ethos’, and hence values education in the school.

**Statements on teaching and learning and values education**

- Teaching and learning is primarily a matter of values.
- Community members possess personal values which impact on teaching and learning.
- As a learning community we have shared values which impact on teaching and learning.
- Values are taught directly (instruction) and indirectly (modelling).
- Curriculum content decisions are values laden.

**Statements on personal development and values education**

- Values education facilitates personal values formation.
- How we view things is based on the values we hold.
- A personal values understanding allows understanding and acceptance of differences.
- Values education plays a significant role in the development of citizenship, ethical behaviour and personal morals.
- Values education is society’s means by which to achieve cultural preservation.
• Values education educates the whole person through imparting knowledge, acceptable behaviours and appropriate feelings.
• Acknowledge the importance of developing social capital through the development of the individual.

Statements on the curriculum and values education

• A values education curriculum encourages personal reflection within an informed mental framework.
• Identification of role models that provide positive examples is critical to a values education model because ‘modelling’ is a powerful educational tool.
• Values education occurs most readily through literature, the social sciences and history-related subjects, but it has a relevance across all subjects.
• Values education needs to be developed through all aspects of the formal and informal curriculum.

Statements about how we ‘values educate’

• Values education is primarily about modelling.
• Our actions and comments, the way we live, what we believe in, who we are, the work we do, the leaders we select and the institutions we support all reflect our values and provide powerful messages to our youth.

Statements about why we need values education

• We are living at a time when values are being continually questioned, and when values are seen by some to be relative and not universal.
• The college needs to reinforce the values it holds.
• Students need values to enable them to interact, to set goals and to self-assess.
• Character education is about developing values.
• Values education is needed to moderate the behaviours of people.
• Values education is needed to enable students to have a base from which to determine the meaning of life.
• Values education is needed to ensure appropriate behaviours.
• Values education is needed to adapt to complex cultural conditions.

This set of lessons and observations from the experience of The Don College not only serves as important input to other schools seeking to implement values education in a concerted way; it also forms the basis of the ‘way forward’ at The Don itself.

When implemented in full these lessons will, the school believes, result in ‘a college community with comprehensive values education processes and an ethos based on inclusion, equity, connectedness, resilience, achievement, creativity, integrity, honesty, trust, and personal and group responsibility’ – a set of values consistent with the shared statement of values and beliefs that the initial mapping exercise produced.
St Monica’s College

Values and faith
Values and faith at St Monica’s College

St Monica’s College is the largest Catholic secondary school in Victoria and is located in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. As a Catholic school, St Monica’s sees education as focusing on the development of ‘the student’s body, mind and soul’.

The initial focus of its values work was, in this context, to consider how this currently is achieved for the more than 2100 culturally and socioeconomically diverse girls and boys the college enrols in Years 7 to 12. This in turn would provide the opportunity to evaluate and improve school programmes, both in and out of the classroom, as part of the school’s ongoing aim to help students become ‘better citizens and adults’.

Sitting behind this overall approach is the school’s perceived need to be relevant to adolescent students as it offers them an education based on the values of the Gospel. As the school itself explains:

Our Catholic identity is not an added extra, or tangential consideration; it is our integral motivation. We seek to be Catholic in our conduct, and in our curricular and co-curricular efforts. The values which lie behind our college are values drawn from the scripture and tradition which support our faith. We want students who see the value of compassion, generosity and contemplation. We want students who seek to engage the world in its problems and provide it with solutions. We want students who value the inalienable dignity in each person. We want these students, and we strive to produce them by creating a culture that will nourish and develop them.

Our college seeks to offer our students an education based on the values of the Gospel. To this end, we need to incorporate authentic moral and spiritual values wholeheartedly into the fabric of our school. As educators and as members of a faith community, we are seeking ways to be relevant to students at their stage of adolescence, and in the context of their experience. Therefore, our values education project aimed to reflect upon and offer suggestions on how to enhance our efforts in this mission.

All of this required the school to first determine, however, what values it actually transmits through its programmes and practices each and every day.

Finding the values we transmit

The principal task the school undertook through the Values Education Study was to audit key aspects of college activity relevant to values education and identify both the explicit and implicit values embedded within them. This could then form the basis of efforts to achieve the longer-term goal to enhance school programmes and aid in ‘the transmission, adopting and practice of these values’.

To this end, the school first established a steering committee and selected an independent consultant to guide them in their work. This was, the school advises, ‘an excellent stratagem as it significantly reduced the potential of reaching biased conclusions … Employing an external agent to conduct the review allowed the steering group to reflect more objectively on the review’s findings’.
In the early planning stages, the steering group noted that:

- we are interested in both the explicit and implicit values in our programmes;
- we are interested to see how each year level builds upon the gains of the previous year level;
- it has a concern for Gospel values; and
- we aimed to clearly identify and communicate our values to our students for their benefit and the benefits they will bring society.

The steering group met weekly or as needed to plan the audit and discuss its findings. Three key areas were identified for investigation: the identification of values in college programmes and practices; an evaluation of particular programmes’ methods and success in transmitting values; and ways of improving values education.

To make the audit more manageable, five clusters of school activities were identified for investigation and one or more focus groups established to examine each:

- formal curriculum – involving decision-making programmes, and each of the personal development, science and religious education faculties;
- pastoral programmes – including Year 7–9 pastoral classes conducted for one period a week, Year 7–9 camps, the school’s Year 10 On the Edge retreat, and its Uniquely Year 9 programme;
- community – encompassing a student environmental group (Envirofriends), Indigenous Awareness Week activities and social justice and community service initiatives;
- individual response – primarily focusing on the school’s Supportive Friends student support network and its student leadership programmes; and
- school and community culture – a senior staff focus group considering public proclamations of values across the school and a student group comprising representatives from each year level.

Each of the focus groups was asked to respond to the following four common questions.

- Please identify the values being fostered in the programme.
- How does your programme foster that value?
- What outward signs indicate that these values are being understood and lived?
- Do you have any suggestions on how we can enhance the transmission of values through the programme?

The audit itself was undertaken over five days, with all focus groups conducted in that time. Staff and students were individually selected by the steering group for the audit. As much as possible, doubling up of staff was avoided as the school ‘did not wish to be extensively favouring any one staff member’s views by consulting them on several occasions’.

It is worth noting, in this context, that the school leadership deliberately refrained from any attempt to identify particular values the school wishes to promote, or any hierarchy of values identified, to avoid unnecessarily influencing the direction the focus groups took.

Since each of the focus groups involved staff (teaching and non-teaching) and students from across the school, a broad range of opinions was gained; though the independent consultant did subsequently suggest that it may have been more valid still if participants were randomly selected rather than chosen according to role.
Some appreciation of the various focus group outcomes can be gained from the following summary of findings from the Community Service/Social Justice group, extracted from the final 52-page report prepared by the consultant for the school.

Programme: Community Service and Social Justice

The values being fostered in the programme

The following values were articulated by the group:

- Gospel values (eg compassion, empathy, acceptance of difference, tolerance, sharing of resources)
- Reflectiveness
- Empowerment (the opportunity and ability to act)
- An acknowledgment and appreciation of student rights and responsibilities
- Appreciation of the sacred
- Ownership and responsibility (the opposite of indifference and apathy)
- Connectedness with the community
- Being of service to others (serving in a way that is not demeaning)
- Initiative
- Enthusiasm
- Passion
- Optimism and hope (knowing it is possible to make a difference)

How the programme fosters these values

The values are explicitly taught during this programme. The values are also modelled by staff who are involved in the programme.

Students are taken through the decision-making processes in which they are encouraged to look for ways they can make a difference, set realistic goals, and then follow them through. There are many different ways students can get involved, and the initiatives take place at many different layers within the school. Students are sent out to outside conferences and meetings (eg Amnesty International day and St Vincent de Paul day).

The staff who are involved in the programme debrief the students in informal ways (eg discussion while driving home from a particular immersion experience or community service experience). There are also opportunities to process the experience during religious education classes, retreats and at reflection days.

Students are exposed to social justice issues through visiting speakers. Community service and fundraising initiatives are supported through the SRC.

The programme works within the school structures (ie each year level owns a particular community service initiative). This increases the level of responsibility of the students.
At an early stage of its deliberations, the steering group also decided to conduct a community forum on values education as a key component of the audit process. Central to the forum was a keynote address by the Episcopal Vicar for Education in the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, Most Rev Mark Coleridge, who placed the college efforts at values education ‘firmly within the context of Catholic moral theology’.

The forum allowed for ‘an open, frank and public discussion about practical ways Catholic values are expressed and articulated within the college … which contributed significantly to the final conclusions of the steering group’; though the school does acknowledge that attracting parents and community members proved difficult due to the short time frame involved, and there were fewer present than it really would have liked.

### Key values to emerge

As a result of the process outlined, the school was able to identify four broad, interrelated sets of values, which it deliberately and implicitly promotes and which generally accord with the Christian beliefs and values that permeate the Catholic system as a whole.

### Outward signs that the values are being understood and lived

There is a high level of student participation in the community service programmes. There is also a high level of support for fundraising initiatives (eg Christmas hampers and Project Compassion). The enthusiasm and ongoing interest of the students is easily detected. Participation is often done in the student’s own time.

Feedback from students and observation of their behaviour provides evidence that the above values are being understood. Feedback from the outside agencies often evidences that the above values are being demonstrated by the students. Feedback from other teachers and staff about what a student said or did in a particular class or in the yard also demonstrates that the students are understanding and living the above values.

Some students get involved with outside agencies such as St Vincent de Paul.

### Suggestions on how to enhance the transmission of these values through the programme

There is always room to have the social justice agenda more firmly embedded in the school. It should permeate the whole school curriculum. It would be good to make it compulsory that every student participates in one social justice programme every year.

Instead of always going out to agencies, St Monica’s College could host more events (ie inviting people in as well as going out). This would demonstrate hospitality.
Values that are about personal development and growth of the individual

‘These named values flow from the belief that every person is created in the image and likeness of God, and therefore has inherent goodness and worth. The role of education and educational programmes is to nurture this uniqueness and dignity, and foster the potential of every adult.’

Specific values and values-based behaviours developed include honesty, self-confidence, self-worth and dignity, trust, care for self (health and wellbeing), optimism and hope, humility, empowerment, integrity, celebrating gender differences and equality, development of identity, understanding emotions, becoming well rounded and balanced, initiative, enthusiasm, passion, pride in self, compassion and perseverance.

Values that are about community connectedness and the common good

‘These named values flow from the particular vision of society that is wedded to the fundamental belief about individual human life. The role of education and educational programmes is to make clear our interdependence with each other and our environment.’

In this case the relevant values and related behaviours identified included relationships, importance of family, building links with local community, tolerance, acceptance of difference, risk taking (in a ‘safe’ or ‘positive’ way), service to others, sense of belonging, awareness that resources are limited, responsibility to the environment, pride in school, respect for property and cooperation.

Values that specifically pertain to the Christian faith and tradition

‘These named values flow explicitly from the context of SMC as a Catholic school. The role of education and educational programmes is to live out and foster the vision, rituals, stories and beliefs that are the pillars and pulse of Christianity.’

Values and associated behaviours identified include justice, Gospel values, Christ as role model, faith, Catholic leadership, spirituality, sacredness of creation, reflection and discernment, appreciation of the sacred and responsibility for the marginalised.

Values that are broad and all encompassing

‘These named values flow from the overarching philosophies and approaches that acknowledge education as a transformation experienced by young people. The role of education and educational programmes is to bring depth, breadth and richness to the life experiences of students.’

The values and approaches relevant in this regard include learning and education (academic and acknowledging different learning styles), decision making, resilience, communication skills (particularly with adults), knowing education as something broader than academic achievement, expanding horizons of students (breadth of experience), knowledge and awareness, fairness and equality, lifelong learning community (school and Christian), order and vision.

In each case the school also was able to specify how it thought these values currently were being fostered, as a basis for considering additional or better ways in which they can be pursued. Some of the flavour of the data gathered can be found in the following list of relevant activities for the first cluster of values about personal development and individual growth. The values listed are, according to the school, supported through personnel and resourcing of counselling and personal care aspects of the school; the sharing of life experience; programmes that focus on one gender; running activities and programmes in home-room groups; providing opportunities for students to discover their talents and interests; providing time and space for self-evaluation and reflection; and special education programmes.
A basis to further improve

The audit conducted at St Monica’s provided the school with detailed baseline data to use as a basis for planning to further improve. Four key aspects of school life were identified for particular focus and action in this regard.

Staff as role models and staff professional development
Professional development is required to assist staff to act as positive role models. In particular, there is a perceived need to provide staff with professional development that will heighten their awareness of Christian values to model and how they can do this with students and parents. Such professional development will include a focus on compassion and forgiveness in relationships with students along with the setting of explicit standards of behaviour, recognition of the individual and concern for the environment. A further benefit is expected to be greater consistency in the teaching and discussion of values with students in and out of class.

Two key areas of priority in this context will be:
• staff knowledge and understanding of the view that Catholics have of the human person (ie created in the image and likeness of God with inherent dignity and worth); and
• staff knowledge and understanding of Catholic social teaching, with particular regard to communal life and the pursuit of the common good.

Student programmes and policies
This will involve an expansion of existing programmes that are seen as enhancing the transmission of values, such as peer mediation and pastoral care; whole school programmes that are explicit about values and have a clear spiritual core; and programmes designed to expose students to key values, such as student leadership and community service of various sorts. Other ways to enhance existing programmes being considered at the college include offering a greater variety of camps and retreats such as a music camp, providing student leadership positions to a broader range of students, and making community service compulsory so that all students participate in one social justice programme a year.

This last strategy reflects the general view of the school that social service is ‘in organic cooperation’ with the Catholic mission, which emphasises love of others in addition to a love of self. ‘When students engage in social service, they learn lifelong lessons about human dignity and social responsibility. No matter how much theory students are presented with, it is not until the jump from thought to action is made that the lesson is truly learnt, and the values truly taught.’

Curriculum development
A number of whole school strategies need to be developed that comprise specific initiatives. These include making health education compulsory so its values reach more students throughout the college, providing drug education at all year levels, and ensuring that community service and social justice permeate the entire school curriculum and are not just confined to religious education classes.

School policies and programmes need, the school believes, to be explicit in their values and have a spiritual core that links values education to ‘the identity of Catholic schools and their core vision of the human person, their dignity and the common good. This would include an explicit understanding of a person’s rights and responsibilities as well as an appreciation of the values of respect, compassion, acceptance and justice’.
What is more, such policies and programmes should be promoted and updated on a regular basis, such as every two or three years.

And overlapping all of these strategies is, the school argues, ‘the need to expose students to these values, particularly through their greater involvement in college programmes such as Student Leadership, Community Service and Envirofriends … Students need to be challenged to role model compassion and forgiveness themselves. Their vision of the human person needs to be consistently challenged and broadened’.

Communication and links with parents
The school recognises that parents have a greater impact on the faith and moral development of students than does the school. ‘Parents can’, they have observed, ‘be alienated from the Church, and there may be conflict between the messages students receive at their home and from the school. Such tension can hinder education generally and values education specifically.’

The college will, therefore, seek to develop parental links with the school and the parents’ parishes to assist parents to understand and support the values to which St Monica’s College adheres. This reflects the recognition that ‘the successful transmission and adoption of values depends on the extent to which all community stakeholders share, model and promote those values’.

A new strategic plan
The values education project undertaken at St Monica’s College has become ‘a benchmark planning document for the college’. It has, the college explains, influenced the staff annual review process, opportunities for staff professional development, pastoral care and home-room programmes, and the college’s broader community service initiatives.

Since completing the project, the college has conducted more specific evaluations of some of its pastoral programmes and has begun to implement changes in those areas. More significantly, however, the college is about to embark on assembling our third College Strategic Plan and values education will be a major part of pastoral care and community development strategies. The values education project was an excellent source of review in 2003 for our 2004 task of developing a new strategic plan. Preliminary plans also exist for a Centre for Adolescent Morality – a think tank organisation which will develop over time.

The audit of the college revealed that the allocation of financial resources can indicate what the school values – eg Saint Monica’s College employs three qualified psychologists, a full-time faith development coordinator, a full-time liturgy support worker, a community support worker and 20 special education teachers. To quote the audit: ‘The fact SMC has these positions and the degree of support given to these areas sends a strong message to students that the school values them, the marginalised, and the community. It also models the Gospel values. It is more than the fact the school has these positions. These positions are also adequately resourced (they are not token efforts). The level of commitment to SMC’s various undertakings is reflected in the degree of follow-up and evaluation that takes place. This reinforces the message behind each programme or event. It also models critical thinking, reflectiveness, striving and commitment to the community’.
In the context of all this planned activity it is, however, important to note the school’s conclusion from its participation in the *Values Education Study*, which arguably mirrored the findings of many schools, that relationships are central to values development and require consistency between actions and words.

One of the crucial lessons we have learnt from the values education project at St Monica’s College is that values are ‘caught’ not ‘taught’. To this end, the core values that the school wants to foster and enhance in the lives of students need to permeate all aspects of the school culture. These core values must be lived and breathed in all areas and by all members of the college community.

Values education, then, is not something that can be ‘done’ by blocking in an afternoon or having workshops or guest speakers. These things may be a small part of a broader scheme, but on their own will be very limited in terms of reaching young people. Placing importance on relationships between all those in the school community, and being deliberate and persistent with regard to how these are lived out and reconciled, is a key factor to building connectedness at the school.

The quality and depth of these relationships form the launching pad for all other aspects of values education. Core values need to be consistently role modelled and continually articulated in order to be best fostered and enhanced in the school environment.

This in turn means that values education is more than a passing event within the school, but rather something that has an ongoing and central place in all the school does, consistent with its overall guiding mission. In the case of the Catholic school of St Monica’s this means:

… to be truly effective, values education should occupy a permanent place among the school’s priorities. Values education can become empty words falling on deaf ears if an authentic Christian witness to reinforce it is absent from the school community.
Salisbury High School

Valuing relationships
Valuing relationships at Salisbury High

Developing positive relationships has been the hallmark of all programmes and activities at Salisbury High School. This process has included work to embed the school’s core values into all that they do, and to review curriculum and pastoral care, starting with Year 8.

Salisbury High is a growing school with more than 1000 students from over 25 nationalities and mixed socioeconomic backgrounds. Located in Salisbury Plains, around 20 kilometres outside Adelaide, the school has something of a reputation for the quality of its teaching programmes and especially its pastoral care.

The school is structured into a middle school and senior school, from Year 8 to Year 12, and every member of staff has responsibility for a care group of 12 to 14 students who they accompany on the whole of their journey through the school. This enables teachers to get to know a small group of students really well on the one hand, and, on the other, students to have an adult within the school who has prime responsibility for them. All communication with parents is conducted by the care group teacher, so the parent–teacher relationship is strengthened as well.

Core community values

Effective relationships depend on a common and shared set of values within the school community, and subsequent commitment to putting these into practice each day.

In the lead-up to its involvement in the Values Education Study, the Salisbury High School community spent a year developing a set of core values for the school. This involved extensive surveying and discussion across the school community about the values people perceived as ‘important in our school’. Interestingly enough, a high degree of consistency between parents, teachers and students was identified, focusing on five main values, which are described below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Success</th>
<th>Respect</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Honesty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Positive self-esteem</td>
<td>• Many enterprising opportunities</td>
<td>• Golden rule</td>
<td>• Goal setting</td>
<td>• Honest with yourself and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Getting along with others</td>
<td>• Striving for excellence</td>
<td>• Positive communication</td>
<td>• Using initiative</td>
<td>• Basis for good relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supporting each other</td>
<td>• Persistence</td>
<td>• Empathy and tolerance</td>
<td>• Completion</td>
<td>• Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sending stars not black holes</td>
<td>• Commitment</td>
<td>• School policies</td>
<td>• Self-motivation/self-discipline</td>
<td>• Being true to yourself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Reliability

• Punctuality

• Relationships

• Respect

• Honesty

• Success

• Organisation

• Loyalty
Establishing this core set of values has, the school believes, been critical to the subsequent success of their work in the area of values education and building positive relationships. As the school itself explains:

Our process in this was genuinely open and non-judgemental. We surveyed parents, teachers and students about what they believed should be the values that would guide our school’s ethos for the next few years and help us to improve the quality of student learning.

Some staff were nervous about this process, expressing concern that they believed they would have different values from parents and [other] staff. There was pressure from some staff to give parents and students some parameters and examples of values. We resisted this pressure and we have always been glad that we did. The surveys revealed an incredibly high commonality between the three groups. The surveys were not sample groups, but incorporated between 90 and 100% of staff, students and parents. The values all groups said were important were relationships, respect, organisation, success and honesty. Only the priority order of the values varied between groups. The commonality of the values was very powerful and motivating for all concerned.

[It meant that the school community could then go on] … to tease out the values to explore what they would look like in an everyday setting.

Putting values into practice

The real task, of course, was to ensure that the values espoused were actually implemented in the everyday processes, actions and talk at the school. To make this manageable, the school decided specifically to examine the place of values education in its curriculum and pastoral care programmes, starting with Year 8 which, in South Australia, is the first year of high school education. This was because working with the newest cohort would likely lead to the best longer-term outcomes. A key guiding theme through this task was ‘if you don’t know what you stand for, you will fall for anything’ and ‘developing your own values guards against peer pressure’.

The school also used the values as

a central feature of our new behaviour management policy. A working group of teachers reviewed our policies, but were asked to keep our core values as a priority in the review. This focus helped change a very dry punitive policy into one based on the importance of mutual respect. Developing positive relationships became the central objective of the policy … [along with] adopting an individual approach to behaviour problems, rather than a generic one size fits all policy.

The school did not, in this context, see values education as ‘different’ content in the curriculum but rather, to use its own words, as being about ‘specific methodologies and strategies designed to explore values within existing content’. This is, they believe, consistent with the overall South Australian Curriculum and Standards Accountability approach, which guides all curriculum in the State and is ‘extremely values rich’.

One question that did emerge through this values clarification process, which the school has yet to really answer, is how often the agreed community values ought be reviewed. Each year the school welcomes more than 200 new students and their parents who will not have engaged in the discussion surrounding the values in place. ‘What’, the school has asked itself, ‘is the use-by date on school community values?’ and, in an associated vein, how often should the school community be surveyed about the values to enact?
A coordinated approach

Successful change in any school requires a leadership team with specific responsibility for the task. Salisbury High began by forming a Values Education Project Team with defined project responsibilities. These are described in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role in school</th>
<th>Task in project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal (Curriculum)</td>
<td>Coordinate curriculum, discuss, review, plan and implement. Coordinate and in some cases deliver training and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Principal</td>
<td>Liaise with local schools about values education strategies, particularly as it pertains to transition from primary schools to Salisbury High.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal (Middle School Manager) Year 8 Manager</td>
<td>Review Year 8 pastoral care and implement values-rich programmes into pastoral care activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The school later added teacher representatives from the subject areas of Maths, Science, Health, English, Studies of Society and Environment, and Arts and Technology to facilitate the integration of values education into the existing content.

The team then initiated substantial consultation with feeder primary schools, to ensure consistency of values education approaches within the neighbourhood, as well as coordinated curriculum emphases from Year 6 through to Year 10. Beyond this, a team of Year 8 teachers was formed to embed values education across the Year 8 curriculum. The teachers were released for a day to examine the possibilities for more explicit teaching of values within the curriculum already in place.

As the process has unfolded, and the approach to values education in the Year 8 curriculum begins to be resolved, the school is moving on to review and enrich all of its curriculum from Year 8 through to Year 12.

For all of this, the school acknowledges it cannot do everything in one go, and mistakes have been made along the way, from which it must learn:

We had hoped to undertake a complete review of our pastoral care programme with the core community values as the basis for change. We did begin this process well at Year 8 level, but made (in retrospect) a hasty decision to implement a pre-packaged programme called *Family Resilience*. A superficial analysis of the programme revealed a strong correlation between our community values and the values inherent in the programme. It was a quick fix approach prompted by the urgency of the values project deadline.

As our Year 8 teachers began to deliver the programme, they expressed concerns. The programme relies heavily on students discussing issues not only in the classroom, but with their parents each week. The language of the programme is very middle class and to some extent presumes a nuclear
family structure. Students and parents showed minimal engagement with the programme and we are not offering it this year.

We had made the mistake of adopting a programme that did not take our own community context into account. We were also expecting parents to engage in a programme they had no involvement in developing.

This year instead, the school has formed a Student Wellbeing Project Team which is seeking to improve ‘the social, emotional and spiritual outcomes for students … [with] our community values [as] the starting point … and we are currently involving staff, students and parents in assessing the wellbeing needs of our students’. Based on the outcomes of this process, the school may draw on some pre-existing programmes such as You Can Do It, MindMatters and even sections of Family Resilience, ‘but we will not just be implementing one programme’, but rather ‘our own school community context and needs will guide our work in this area’.

Training is critical

Conversations with staff, students and parents quickly revealed that the core values developed by the school community were unlikely to be taken seriously by students unless they saw them actively practised and modelled by their teachers.

This in turn pointed to a clear need for training and development of staff, starting with the leadership team. As a result, the school worked with colleagues from the South Australian Centre for Leaders to plan ongoing training for some 25 staff in a variety of leadership roles.

The training of leaders was seen as particularly important as the school intends that trained leaders will be the ones who provide similar sessions for other groups of staff and students. It is interesting to note that the leaders’ workshop did raise ‘fascinating questions’ related to the core values of the school, such as ‘what does it mean to be an honest leader? how honest is too honest? how can you talk respectfully and honestly to teachers who are underperforming? … [and] The most challenging question … what will we do as leaders if we see other leaders not displaying our school values?’

This leadership training was then supplemented by training and development for most Year 8 teachers as well as Year 7 teachers from the main feeder schools. Values education also was included on the agenda of a huge variety of meetings in the school such as Year 7–8 transition meetings, faculty meetings, staff meetings, leadership meetings, student representative council meetings and more.

Teachers were, the school reports, very positive about the training received. In particular, they were ‘extremely appreciative of release time to reflect on current curriculum, and plan activities that will engage students’.

This comprehensive set of activities to engage teachers in the school has generated a level of discussion where the school feels ‘a genuine commitment to turn values education into everyday reality’. The whole approach also dovetailed neatly with an examination of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme by the school, and teachers were ‘excited by the links … Instead of seeing values education as just another “add-on”, they can see that engaging global curriculum must immerse students in an exploration of values. This in turn encourages higher-order thinking and a much higher level of critical analysis in learning’.
One positive, unintended outcome of the project reported by the school has been the ‘willingness and enthusiasm of our primary feeder schools to work on a seamless approach to values education … with our staff’. This in turn has helped develop closer relationships between teachers across the primary–secondary divide, consistent with the school’s overall efforts to make better relationships the key to its values education approach.

**Some encouraging results**

As a result of its work over the past two years, the school has witnessed some ‘encouraging and measurable signs that we are improving outcomes for staff and students’ – though it is quick to acknowledge that it also is working on such programmes as *Boys' Education and Quality Schools Improvement*, which also will have contributed to these results. Nonetheless, the school has linked its community values to these other programmes and believes its focus on values ‘has helped drive the other programmes and processes’.

Some of the positive evidence collected over the period 2002 to 2004 includes:

- improved student enrolment rates – from 810 in 1999 to 1019 in 2003 with increases achieved at all year levels – which the school partly attributes to its core values having ‘an impact on the community choosing SHS as a desired education site’;
- improved student attendance at most year levels, but especially Years 9 and 10;
- reduced suspensions to the point where the school now has the lowest suspension rate for high schools in its area;
- high levels of staff satisfaction as indicated on the annual Psychological Hazard and Health Survey and evidenced by extremely low staff turnover;
- high parental satisfaction as evident in the annual survey of parent opinion which, among other things, demonstrated parents’ respect for the school’s education system and their support for the school values, particularly around success of outcomes, teaching and reporting on student achievement;
- increasing waiting lists at Year 8 entry level – 70 students in 2004;
- a high level of staff commitment to the importance of values education, resulting in major changes to middle school curriculum and pastoral care; and
- positive results in the annual survey of student opinion which reveal ‘positive attitudes towards the functioning of the whole school with particular emphasis on the school’s focus on student achievement’.

Looked at overall, the school believes that using its community values to guide a myriad of school processes has given us greater purpose and structure. Our school, like many others, is an extremely complex organisation catering for the needs of over 1000 people. It is a dynamic, fast-moving place, often full of conflicting priorities and a sense of urgency. Having a common set of values helps … reflect on the important things.

A key leader in the school takes this even further, explaining that:

In any one day I could be doing any of all of the following (often at the same time):

- mediating between students, staff and parents;
- strategic planning;
• working with staff on curriculum development;
• marketing;
• behaviour management;
• writing reports/submissions;
• organising and delivering professional learning;
• reviewing processes or programmes;
• breaking up fights;
• counselling students, staff and parents;
• organising yard clean-ups;
• checking on yard duty teachers; and, of course,
• teaching.

I believe that in a busy, complex day, having the school values to help guide my priorities, processes, language and goals really helps me to be a better leader and teacher. When I make mistakes, or things don’t work out the way I hoped, I often use our values to help me critically reflect – ie was I honest with all parties? was I using respectful language? was the presentation organised well? and will this process result in student success?

From a whole school perspective, our values help us to make decisions, action plan, deal with conflicting priorities and resolve stalemates. They guide our direction, give us purpose and help us reflect and evaluate the system that we work in and on.

A basis for further planning

The school leadership team is now embarking on the development of a new strategic and whole school learning plan, and the school values ‘will once again help guide our planning and practice’. Values education in particular is, in this context, very much seen as ‘a powerful way to create a school culture rich in learning, mutual respect and humanism’. It is, as the school argues, ‘an excellent way to find commonality and purpose in a complex and challenging setting. Values-led strategic planning, policy review and process analysis within a school setting offers educators another tool to improve outcomes for students’.

At Salisbury High, this involves trying to develop curriculum that encourages students to ‘grapple with values, explore their own and others’ opinions, and breed tolerance and big picture analysis’. One of the challenges the school faces in this context, along with other schools in these case studies, is to assess students’ understanding and application of values education, in order to strengthen the range of data gathered on outcomes achieved.

To help cement the whole approach firmly in school culture and practice, the school has also moved beyond the focus on student curriculum to address human resources as well. Values education has, for instance, become an important part of the staff induction process, with all new staff involved in values workshops.

Beyond this, values education has been included as an integral part of the school’s performance management process. The core community values feature prominently in staff personal portfolios, which each staff member has to use in scheduled line management meetings. ‘As part of our Values in Leadership programme, leaders will be supported to use our values as the starting point for discussions with those they supervise.’
Finally, the school plans to work more, not just with its Year 8 cohort on what the school’s values actually look, sound and feel like for them, but with all students on applying the school values to student-run projects and initiatives such as student lobby groups, assemblies, negotiated curriculum and house activities.

Relationships as the core

As evident throughout this case study report, relationships are at the heart of the Salisbury High approach to values education and improving student outcomes.

The school has, for many years now, worked with a care case management approach, which encourages ‘positive, lasting relationships between students, care teachers and parents’. The results of the community values survey have confirmed the lasting impact this system has had.

The school aims that all students remain in the same care group as they progress from Year 8 to Year 12, and every effort is made to keep the same care teacher with the same care group for the entire school career of each student. Specific school support structures in this context include:

- two 10-minute care periods per day, at the start of both the morning and afternoon sessions, for roll call, student notices, follow-up of absences, discipline referrals and so on;
- one 100-minute session per week in which pastoral care, work education and enterprise activities are conducted in care groups by care teachers and students also are supported to develop their organisational and time management skills;
- the expectation that every teacher, coordinator and executive member has a care group;
- conscious efforts to ensure that the care groups remain small to facilitate contact with parents on an individual basis; and
- the understanding that care teachers make decisions on the level of interaction with parents, and the consequent expectation that parents calling the school should speak to the care teacher first.

The whole approach is underpinned by a clear and supportive statement of roles predicated on the belief that

the core to a successful care management is the relationship between

- the student and the care teacher
  - daily management/attendance
  - counsellor/mentor/personal issues/conflict resolution
  - point of contact for parents and other teachers
  - subject/career counsellor

- the student and his/her peers
  - relationships/conflict resolution/personal development

- the care teacher and the parents/caregivers
  - regular contact and communication
  - use diary for positive comments
  - encourage parents to contact you
- the student and the school community
  - rights and responsibilities
  - use student counsellor and other agencies when necessary
  - adopt a harassment free zone philosophy
  - market school through positive action

- the student and the care programme
  - follow the programme.

Participation is, the school argues, ‘central to any programme, and active engagement is a definition that reflects the aim of the care programme’. Teachers are, in this context, specifically exhorted to ensure that all students are involved in meaningful activities, encourage student leadership and develop their classrooms as forums for student voice.

This overall values-based caring approach has, according to the school, had a powerful impact on the whole school ethos. In particular:

In terms of overall school ethos, there has been a much greater emphasis in all our school structures on improving processes rather than blaming individuals. Our core school values help to validate and sustain our emphasis on developing positive relationships within our school communities. Our values are often used as a supporting tool in a systems, quality improvement approach to a myriad of issues, eg improving attendance, timetabling and staff conflict …

[The school leadership] can now see a huge range of applications for values education … [and] Our values are playing an increasingly important role in whole school structures … to improve outcomes for students.
Cabramatta High School

Common educational values
Common educational values at Cabramatta High

With almost all its 930 students coming from non-English-speaking backgrounds, and about 60% having been in Australia for less than seven years, Cabramatta High School felt a need to determine the commonalities and differences in values that exist between teachers, parents and students as the basis for moving forward on values education in the school.

The primary focus of its Much More than the 3 Rs project was, in this context, a need for staff to understand what parents and families believe about education as the precursor to building a stronger home–school partnership to better meet student needs. This in turn would enable the school to develop more of a whole school approach to values education with the support of its school community.

This whole exercise was predicated on the school’s belief that implicit values must be made explicit through dialogue between teachers, students and parents, with a view to:

- articulating common and agreed educational values to stakeholders; and
- ensuring that these values permeate the curriculum and school life in general in an overt way.

A simple survey to use

In an effort to clarify and understand the different cultural value systems in the community, the school developed a simple survey mechanism. It administered this survey to a random sample of students in Years 7 to 12 covering all major cultural groups, a sample of parents through first language parent forums, and teachers in the school.

The survey used the same set of questions for each group, adjusted marginally as required. In the case of parents, the following questions were asked.

1. **Value of education in society**: What is the importance of education in life?
2. **Parent values**: What are the three most important things you want for your child?
3. **Role of the school**: What do you think we should be teaching your child at school?
4. **Aspirations**: What do you want your child to be doing when he or she leaves school?

The information gained was then synthesised, analysed and widely published to generate further discussion on the degrees of congruence and dissonance that exist.

The interesting thing that emerged from the process is that the degree of difference that staff had expected (and which arguably may have affected the way in which they teach and relate to students) proved to be fanciful, and there was far more commonality than difference between each of the three groups. This is evident in the broad findings for each of the four questions asked.

1. **The value of education in society**
   ‘All groups identified that knowledge provided options, that education continued throughout life and that society benefited from having educated people who were able to contribute positively.’
2 Teacher/parent/student values
‘All groups commented on the need for basic knowledge and sound educational outcomes as well as self-esteem. While students wanted a successful career path as a result of their education, for parents it was generally far more important that their children develop ethical values and good morals/manners.’

3 The role of the school
‘The common belief system underpinning responses was the value placed on cooperation, interrelationships and harmony for a multicultural society.’

4 Aspirations
‘All groups wanted students to obtain satisfying full-time employment. The different emphases between the groups in this area were that parents and staff were concerned about students becoming responsible citizens, while students hoped to be happy and achieve a contented lifestyle.’

These outcomes have important implications for future school planning and led the school’s Values Education Project Team to the following conclusions.

- Prior to the survey, staff were unsure of the values held by parent groups and thought there may be some dissonance. The survey has revealed that there is significant congruence between the values held by staff and parents.
- This congruence between staff and parents is a unifying force in home–school partnerships. It paves the way for enhanced communication and educational outcomes for students in the future.
- Because the development of ethical values was of high concern to parents, the teaching of lessons on motivation, goal setting, resolving conflict peacefully, healthy lifestyle, social and survival skills, social and civic responsibilities, cultural sensitivity and other emergent ethical values strengthens the congruence between home and school. This confirms positive home–school partnerships with parent groups.
- The surveys have reinforced and modelled a process of collaborative, inclusive practice. This provides a foundation for future development and enhancement of educational decision making and processes.

The use of community languages did, the school acknowledges, create timing issues that it needed to address flexibly, though clearly this was worth it in the end. To use the school’s own words:

Timing required for translations and interpretation was greater than first anticipated. This meant that some timelines developed by the action research team needed to be amended. This also led to the establishment of protocols for future projects. Greater understandings were developed between all staff members about the complexity of producing professional standards in translating and interpreting.

Promoting the educational values of the school

The school used the survey outcomes, and the high degree of consistency that exists, to produce a professional video highlighting the shared academic and social values of the school along with community pathways for the future.

The video, which involved current and ex-students in all stages of production, displayed activities that reflect the school’s educational values, and premiered at a major multilingual parent, teacher and
student forum in mid 2003. Feedback has been very positive indeed and many parents in particular have requested it be shown to wider audiences such as feeder primary schools ‘to share with them our common vision’ for Cabramatta High.

Some of the flavour of the video content can be gained from the following brief extract, which follows an introduction to the school and its context:

Our school vision at Cabramatta High School is of young men and women who are motivated, responsible, cooperative, thinking, informed individuals, who are fully developing talents, interests, positive attitudes and values.

They will be literate and able to communicate effectively in English.

They will confidently participate in, and contribute to as valuable community members, Australian society, vocationally, socially and culturally, now and in the future.

These young men and women will value education for itself and as a lifelong activity.

They will have confidence in themselves and be able to manage life experiences, be hopeful and enjoy fulfilling lives.

It then proceeds to explain the way in which the school’s vision addresses all aspects of character including the academic, the social, and community membership and pathways for the future, including an outline of the facilities, and curriculum and other programmes offered by the school.

The video proved to be a particular highlight of the project with:

• parents acknowledging that ‘what they saw as significant was represented in the video’;
• high levels of student interest in the video as ‘they saw their vision of what makes their school unique and exciting reflected’;
• staff indicating that the video ‘captures the spirit of the school and, in essence, what the school holds to be important about education’;
• the use of students, ex-students and staff in the production of the video creating ‘a sense of unity and pride in the project’;
• the use of the main school community languages in the video serving as ‘a clear statement that the school is an inclusive environment with a shared vision for all’; and
• the video being shown in the wider community, especially at primary schools to ‘explicitly promote the values of Cabramatta High’.

As a bonus the use of talented ex-students in creating the video, along with the requirement for the academic research team to develop liaison and creative process skills, proved to be ‘an excellent opportunity for professional growth’.

A valuable process

The school is using the data gained from the surveys, and the video it subsequently produced, to develop a prospectus in five different languages highlighting the values it holds. Together, these two means of communication will enable the school to inform its community about the high level of values congruence that exists, especially as new students, parents and teachers join the school.
At the same time, the school has purchased, developed and trialled a range of values-related resources in key areas of concern, including conflict resolution, tolerance, aspirations, overcoming stereotypes, anger management, bullying, goal setting, time management and positive self-esteem. These have been supplemented by a series of workshops for identified teachers, students and parents with a focus on interpersonal behaviours and skills. As these teaching and learning packages are progressively implemented and evaluated, they will become part of the subject-based curriculum and used for special focus groups as a long-term resource.

One of the main benefits gained, however, is not so much the outcomes of the surveys and other processes used as the value of the process itself.

Using a collaborative approach has, the school reports, resulted in ‘significant ownership and interest in the project across the school’, though it does, the school acknowledges, ‘take significant time’. Due to the multicultural nature of the school community, it was essential to work closely with a group of interpreters and the school’s own community liaison officers. This allowed for extensive clarification of issues and the language used in values discussions, but again created issues of time as an further stage was added to the whole process.

The school found the multilingual consultative surveys particularly valuable in ascertaining the beliefs of a wide range of school community members because:

- the questions used were open and allowed a range of responses without predetermining the outcome;
- using a multilingual format and administering the surveys in discussion groups enabled ideas to be explored and expressed;
- associated training of community liaison officers and interpreters in the survey style and the overall direction of the values project enabled culturally specific language to be explained, and issues raised ‘to create a platform of equal understanding’;
- the inclusive nature of the survey allowed students to access and respond to the survey in their first language, which indicated to the respondents that ‘their contributions were significant, and overcame difficulties in cultural language’;
- the process used to analyse the survey results was informative and took into account all opinions expressed; and
- an action research methodology was developed ‘between professionals allowing for collegial professional learning’.

**A common values base**

The school found that the project gave significant impetus to ‘a dialogue between stakeholders about the values of Cabramatta High School’. More specifically, it has clarified for the school that:

- ‘a solid values base supports every aspect of school life’;
- ‘once the values platform was articulated, it provided a common language for dialogue between students, staff and parents’;
- ‘the values education framework supports other elements such as welfare and curriculum change’; and
- ‘in conjunction with other school initiatives, the work of the school’s Learning Support Team has been enhanced to encompass all learners’.
Students have, for instance, ‘indicated they saw their participation in the project as equal and important … They were passionate and focused on their responses’. Equally important, students now ‘articulate to a greater degree pride in the school and what education achieves in their lives’.

Beyond this, there has been a ‘significant increase in student participation in extracurricular activities’; with, for example, 17 students becoming school media reporters, 40 students auditioning for the choir (an increase of 300% on previous years with four times the number of boys), and more students participating in whole school environmental projects. And students’ focus on lifelong learning and pathways has been strengthened, as evidenced by a 90% attendance rate of parents and students at the school’s ‘Beyond Year 10’ information evening, compared with a mere 10% the year before.

The project also has changed the attitudes of staff:

The survey challenged assumptions made by staff about the parent body. Staff and parent survey responses were closely aligned and indicated strongly shared desires, beliefs and directions in education. Previously it was thought that parents solely wanted academic outcomes. The project indicated a much broader range of desired outcomes.

[In this way] the survey created an equal platform and allowed staff to see the true measure and scope of parent–partnership potential.

This in turn has extended to a focus on classroom practice, with conscious efforts to:

- make explicit links between classroom activities and wider applicability;
- adopt specific ‘school to work’ initiatives such as The Real Game, which now is embedded in the Stage 5 English curriculum;
- plan extracurricular activities with clear learning outcomes for students; and
- expand parent–teacher nights and involve representatives from TAFE colleges, universities and community organisations to promote lifelong learning and the importance of having clear aspirations and setting goals.

This reflects the school’s decision to extend its focus on ‘much more than the 3 Rs’, to the broader goal of increasing student motivation and participation in the life of the school.

Throughout the project parents have, the school has noted, indicated that they ‘felt consulted, valued and listened to’, with the result that they expressed high levels of satisfaction with the programmes and structures the school provides. This may be one reason that the school has experienced an 8% increase in enrolments over the past twelve months with many new entrants specifically commenting on ‘the school’s reputation for a curriculum preparing students for the future with high academic standards linked to social development’. Beyond this, the sharing of information from the values education project with local primary schools has only served as an additional transition tool.

Put simply, the result of the values education project in the school, and the consultative survey process used, is that there now is ‘an established avenue for inclusion of parents in the curriculum review process’, which the school will continue over time.
Such process has yielded ‘a clearer view of shared educational values at Cabramatta High School’ and more explicit articulation of the values that are held, including plans to:

- display the school’s values in the main foyer of the school to enable all parents and new students to develop common understanding of them; and
- include the values in the school prospectus, which is disseminated in the wider retail and service sectors of the community as well as to the school’s prospective students and parents.
Theme 2: Developing student civic and social skills and building resilience

- Strengthening harmony at Glendale East
  Glendale East Public School, New South Wales

- Building a safe, tolerant and inclusive Campbell High
  Campbell High School, Australian Capital Territory

- Strong and smart at Cherbourg State
  Cherbourg State School, Queensland

- Character and service at Matthew Hogan School
  Matthew Hogan School, New South Wales
Glendale East Public School

Strengthening harmony
Strengthening harmony at Glendale East

Glendale East Public School is located on New South Wales’ Central Coast. In the late 1980s, Glendale East Public School, which sees about 15% of its population move in and out of the school each year, was experiencing a range of unacceptable behaviours including:

- bullying;
- teasing of students who had had traumatic experiences;
- not taking responsibility for one’s own actions;
- fighting among students as a common occurrence;
- groups of students versus others; and
- racial slurs.

In response, the school initiated a comprehensive review of its policy and approach to student welfare, based on the key values associated with ‘social harmony and cohesion’ – in effect, an attempt to:

- ‘make a significant change in the motivation of students in respect of behaviour, learning and social interactions and exploring projects that would have a substantial impact on this’; and
- ‘seeking to develop a positive school culture’.

Central to the process were visits by the principal to each class to seek student answers to the question, ‘How would you like to be treated?’ The answers overwhelmingly took the form of ‘with respect’, ‘cared for’ and ‘in a nice and caring manner’.

The data gathered from this and consultations involving the student council, parents, staff, school council and the citizens’ welfare committee were then used to develop a school code of conduct steeped in the core values of excellence, citizenship and learning throughout life. The fact that the whole process was predicated on analysing students’ views on how they want to be treated themselves, and hence ought to treat others, saw the first item in the code of conduct become ‘care for yourself and others’.

More specifically, the school code of conduct exhorts community members to:

- care for yourself and others;
- learn all you can and always do your best;
- be well mannered;
- work and play safely;
- be honest;
- accept responsibility for your own actions;
- look after our school; and
- earn our school a good name.

This subsequently has been embodied in an agreed statement of values developed in meetings of parents and teachers, which focuses on three key dimensions:

**Caring for our students**
At Glendale East we care about all aspects of the children’s welfare and learning.
Learning
At Glendale East we provide a well-balanced, stimulating and challenging programme delivered by a highly motivated staff that engage in continual professional development to ensure all students achieve the best possible learning outcomes.

Positive behaviour
At Glendale East we respect one another and, through clear, well-structured procedures and strategies, help our students develop cooperation, responsibility, self-direction, respect and caring for others.

A two-pronged approach

The school’s programme to build social harmony and cohesion comprised two, closely interrelated strategies: the development of a comprehensive approach to student welfare, including the agreed code of conduct, and the trial and progressive extension of the Living Values programme in the school’s personal development, health and physical education programme.

The Living Values programme involves a partnership of educators around the world, supported by UNESCO and sponsored by the Spanish National Committee of UNICEF, Planet Society and the Brahma Kumaris. It grew out of an international project initiated by the Brahma Kumaris in 1995 to promote the United Nations Charter theme ‘to reaffirm the fundamental human rights in the dignity and worth of the human person’. There is an active website to facilitate interaction between ‘adherents’ throughout the world (http://www.livingvalues.net/values/), and the programme specifically teaches about the values of ‘peace, respect, love, tolerance, happiness, responsibility, cooperation, humility, honesty, simplicity, freedom and unity’.

At Glendale East, students studied two of these values each term, using activities obtained from Living Values programme resources; though a subsequent review of the initial implementation of the programme led the school to streamline it into their scope and sequence so that one value, rather than two, is the focus each term.

Two particularly interesting features of the school’s integrated approach, which have proved popular with all members of the school community, are:

- mosaic pots, designed by the students to exemplify the key values of the Living Values programme and provide ‘a visual focus for substantial change’; and
- a Cool Cards programme whereby teachers from any area of the school can reward a student with a card for exemplary behaviour leading to the award of a merit certificate for five cool cards collected, plus a voucher to the school canteen.

A common language in the school

The approach outlined above emanated from a school community belief that:

- ‘we needed to educate the whole person for themselves and for the future’;
- ‘we could not address social and emotional issues without reference to a common values base that is both embedded in the curriculum and pervasive’; and
- ‘for our students to reach their potential, the school needs to structure school life to engender the values of excellence, citizenship and lifelong learning (as expressed in the school mission statement)’.
There is, in this context, ‘no one programme implemented independently that will be sufficient to teach values’, and, rather, it requires a whole school, holistic approach. In particular, the school believes that students, parents and staff all need a common language of values to learn to deal effectively with conflict and generally manage social interaction; which is where the Living Values programme particularly fits in.

A staff trial of the programme concluded that the lessons were ‘easy to implement and linked well with the other key learning areas’, incorporating as they do discussion, imagining, role-play, music, writing and visual arts. Staff also found that the lessons focus on developing students’ values vocabulary.

By 2000, for instance, when the programme spanned the full school from kindergarten to Year 6, and focused on the units for peace, respect and love, teachers were able to relate to values lessons in the classroom when dealing with issues in the playground, as all members of the school community knew what key terminology meant. What is more, an independent evaluation of the school’s values education approach, conducted by a member of the University of Newcastle’s School of Humanities in 2003, found that staff, parents and children all responded in a positive way, to the point where the programme was becoming an important part of the school ethos.

When combined with other aspects of the school’s holistic approach, such as an anti-bullying programme, an environmental programme, Cool Cards and common classroom rules, the staff felt that the values programme was succeeding in engendering a more peaceful and friendly atmosphere in the school. This in turn led teachers to suggest a need to:

• further incorporate values into the school curriculum;
• ensure that students are recognised in all fields of endeavour;
• work on children’s self-esteem; and
• establish long-term goals for values education.

In addition, a number of teachers did specifically mention, in this context, the need to model the values the school espouses, including through the use of ‘the language of values’.

That said, the school, like others in these case studies, recognises the need to constantly monitor and improve its values education approach, especially in relation to finding and developing lessons and ways of working that ‘provide the time in a busy curriculum for it to proceed’. The school also, in common with nearly all other schools in the Values Education Study, noted the fact that evaluative data gathered to date is purely qualitative and anecdotal, and a need exists to develop ‘some kind of “objective” measure of progress’.

To this end the school did, in 2003, administer to students in Years 5 and 6 a Values Scale, developed by Dr Neville Schofield at the University of Newcastle, which provided it with baseline data on a four-point scale (eg from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’) for the following set of values-related statements:

1. I like to do my best in everything.
2. Sometimes I take things even if they are not mine.
3. I would be happy to be best friends with someone from another race.
4. I like it when someone encourages me to do well.
5. I sometimes pick on younger kids.
6. My parents would be happy if I was best friends with someone from another race.
7. I think doing well at school is important.
8. If I was caught doing something wrong, I would try to blame someone else.
9. I like having people from other countries living in Australia.
10 I like it when everyone is involved in making important class decisions.
11 I always tell the truth.
12 I think Australia should give money to poor countries.
13 I like to get involved in school activities such as music, sports and clubs.
14 I don’t always do what I say I’m going to do.
15 I think we should help people who don’t have much money.
16 I think doing well at school will help me do well at other things like work when I am older.
17 If I was caught doing something wrong I would own up.
18 Men should be able to stay at home and look after children while their wives work, if they choose.
19 I like asking questions in class.
20 I don’t always try my best.
21 Women should be able to do whatever job they want.
22 I like working with other people.
23 I would go along with my friends, even if they were doing something wrong.
24 I like to learn about all kinds of things, even when I’m not in school.
25 I never take things that are not mine.
26 I like to be on time for things.
27 If I come across something new and unusual, I like to try and figure out what it’s all about.
28 I like it when people express their own point of view.
29 I think that kids who do well at school should be rewarded.
30 I am involved in lots of activities outside of school.
31 I like creative activities such as writing, drawing and making things.
32 I think our school needs to have rules.
33 If I say I’m going to do something, I keep my word.

The scale is based around the three basic categories of school, integrity and equity, and is easily adapted to values education programmes in other schools.

The results of the survey showed that ‘students are happy with their school life and especially agree that school assists them to do well at other things like work’.

This happiness tends to be confirmed by playground observations conducted by the independent evaluator, who concluded:

Playground behaviour was mostly very positive with only a few examples of negative behaviour … [and] It should be stressed that the negative incidents involved included very small numbers of students.

Some positive outcomes

The independent evaluation referred to above found significant achievements from the school’s two-pronged approach in only a limited time, as evident in the following brief extract from its report:

Most students, even those in kindergarten, could use language like respect and peace, and were able to talk about school rules. One of the most obvious tokens of caring for one another was picking up children who had fallen on the concrete … Students talked about assisting others to be friends … Many students commented that they should treat others as they would like to be treated. Most felt the teachers were helpful and friendly and tried to help students learn their work … It
was exciting to see how many children, including many children who had some problems in their schooling, were interested and involved in values education.

This observation was echoed by the school’s principal who, in even more expansive fashion, said:

What has had the most profound effect on me is to see our students being so tolerant and accepting of someone who they know is acting out because their life is hard. The students see tolerance and love of the child (not the child’s behaviours) modelled by the teachers and somehow they know that this is good.

It is interesting to note, in the context of this discussion of student responses to the approach, that the school reports that ‘last year, our Year 5 Basic Skills average was actually higher than the state average, with 59% scoring in the top two bands. Rather than dealing with other issues, the critical mass of our Year 5 students were ready for learning and improving … [and] 78% of our Year 5 students were above the state average for improvement since Year 3’.

These positive outcomes for students are only mirrored by the staff. As one of the early implementers explained:

After a review of the implementation of the programme, the staff unanimously decided to take on the Living Values programme and so had whole school implementation. One of the key reasons for this take-up was that the staff saw the need for students to have a values vocabulary. This would enable staff to assist the students when managing behaviour – often problems stemmed from the difference in perceived values …

[When the Living Values programme was implemented across the board in the school] there was a positive response once again. Teachers were able to relate to values lessons when dealing with issues both in the classroom and playground, giving everyone ‘a common language’ to use. Children learned peer mediation skills during conflict resolution activities, enabling them to take responsibility for resolving problems which arose between friends. The Living Values programme proved to be the type of programme we were looking for. Staff, children and parents responded in a positive way and the programme was becoming an important part of our school ethos.

Perhaps one of the most significant outcomes of the school’s approach is the fact that enrolments from out of the zone have increased ‘because’, according to the independent evaluator, ‘of the values programme that has been spoken about in the community’; and the school is, she also noted, ‘attracting students from non-government schools’.

Certainly the school did add a new class in 2003 and is two students short of yet another new class this year; and this is happening while, the school explains, ‘it is acknowledged that we have taught students with huge social/emotional difficulties’:

A neighbouring principal expressed his understanding of this phenomenon as ‘not because you don’t have students with problems, but because you have the structures and supports in place to deal with them’.

Last year, a backhanded compliment was given to the school at a neighbouring school’s P and C meeting, ‘Five years ago Glendale East was where you didn’t send your child, today it is where you do.’
The keys to success

The overall project adopted by the school reflected its belief that values education is not a single programme, but rather a whole school approach which involved, as the school explains it:

- ‘working on the foundations of our values in our welfare policy … Our Code of Conduct has a strong values base’;
- ‘the Living Values programme [which] aimed at unpacking and exploring those values’;
- ‘the green project [rehabilitation of school grounds] as a visible expression of what was happening’; and
- ‘the numerous social skills programmes that we implement [which] help to spell out the practical expressions of our values’.

The independent evaluation revealed that the two key components of the success of this holistic approach were:

- the adoption and use of a common language for discussing values and associated behaviours; and
- the emphasis throughout the school on students and teachers actually modelling those values in their daily lives.

The development of the statement of shared beliefs, with its focus on caring, learning and positive behaviour, only strengthened the commitment of staff to full participation in the programme. This in turn is reflected in a willingness to take on leadership roles in such areas as:

- developing the school welfare policy;
- implementing peer support;
- initiating a green reserve project, where volunteers worked with students on rehabilitation of the school grounds;
- the school’s buddy project; and
- teaching a values curriculum which, although only intended for volunteers, was embraced by the staff as a whole.

The last point related to teaching values in the curriculum reflects the school’s finding that having a single approach ultimately was not enough, and ‘formally teaching values in the school curriculum seems to somehow validate it along with maths and spelling’. It is, they concluded, ‘too important to simply lie in the hidden curriculum’.

Beyond this, teaching of values-based units can be especially useful in class, as outlined by one teacher in the school, who explained:

I have had considerable success with teaching units that have a very strong values base. These include units on community, migration, Aboriginal issues and environmental issues. I noticed that these units, especially the one on community, always had a profound effect for good on the students in class …

I would like to set up a situation in which teachers, with help, can write activities that more strongly focus on values in their units. We have a number of novels and units that lend themselves to this. We could have spent time examining our units and clarifying the values component. This would not have replaced the values curriculum but enriched it.
Given this sort of view, the school recently initiated discussions on:

- further incorporation of key values into the school curriculum;
- how best to model the values that are expected in the school, including using the language of values; and
- the potential to train teachers in the use of the Rock and Water programme already in place in many other schools.¹

It also already has:

- sought to recognise children in all fields of endeavour through such means as the weekly news bulletin;
- continued with its green reserve programme;
- adopted programmes and units to work on building children’s self-esteem; and
- arranged programmes, units and excursions to encourage students’ intercultural understanding ‘beyond their own immediate community boundaries’.

That said, the school is clear that improving values education is a process, rather than an event. As the school itself notes:

Major change in a school, especially social change like developing culture, takes time, effort and patience. Despite one’s best efforts as an educator, one never truly finishes the job – to think it can be [finished] is a delusion. Each year, we start again with many new students, new situations and consequentially, many challenges. The groundwork that we have done helps us to meet these challenges, but does not take them away. The progress that we made has enabled us to put more time, effort and energy into the important job of teaching …

In this important work [however], the ultimate need is for teachers and staff to support one another. Today’s educator needs to be so much more than an imparter of knowledge, and today’s schools need to be more than institutions of learning. They form the building blocks of our future in the values we teach.

¹ Rock and Water is a martial arts-based physical and social skill development programme using games and activities to develop students’ sense of self-control, self-reflection and self-confidence.
Campbell High School

Safe, tolerant and inclusive
Building a safe, tolerant and inclusive Campbell High

An attack on a teacher one lunchtime by two suspended Year 8 boys late in 2000 prompted Campbell High School to employ a youth worker to develop strategies aimed at creating a safer and more tolerant and inclusive school. The attack was ‘unprecedented’ at the school, which decided that the best response would be ‘to reshape the school’s culture’ in ways that extended beyond just general anger management strategies to a more sustainable shift that better embodies the identified core values of being ‘a safe, compassionate, tolerant and inclusive school’.

Having long enjoyed a reputation for academic, cultural and sporting excellence, the school, located in Canberra behind the Australian War Memorial, has experienced significant enrolment decline related to an ageing population, and is increasingly reliant on students from nearby Queanbeyan and neighbouring rural New South Wales. The school clientele, while still predominantly Anglo-Celtic, now includes 14% of students from culturally diverse backgrounds, 4% of students with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, 3% classified as students with disabilities and about 25-30% considered ‘at risk’ of depression and/or substance abuse. As the school itself puts it:

While our demographic overall is middle class, Campbell High students now come from every group in society – from the families of wealthy farmers and business people through to families rehoused in public housing after being the victims of domestic violence, and families with no adults in employment.

The school’s focus in this context was to build student citizenship values primarily at Years 9 and 10. This constituted a shift from previous leadership training, where Year 10 students acted as mentors for incoming students in Year 7, to a focus on student leaders in this Year 7–10 school acting as active citizens who are able to embody and model the core school values of tolerance, caring, inclusiveness and the right to feel safe in identifying and pursuing school- and community-based tasks. Central to the approach is training of the full Year 9 cohort through a two-day citizenship conference, with the support of community mentors, to serve as a screening device to identify 40 students for a more intensive four-day training programme to enable them to take on the active citizenship role in Year 10.

The Year 9 and 10 stage is, in the view of the school, ‘an ideal period between dependence and independence to focus on the growth of values, conceived as active citizenship … Year 9 and 10 (ie 14 to 16 year olds) are at a critical time to do some kind of transition process that is task-related’, and which focuses on service to the community.

The Community Leadership Implementation Project

The school’s Community Leadership Implementation Project (CLIP), initiated in 2001, aims to develop student and civic leadership skills in Years 9 and 10 through experiential learning processes and the application of learned skills to real school and community tasks.

The project works on the assumption that ‘values cannot be taught, they only can be learned’.
CLIP was, the school explains, introduced to:

- facilitate the Year 10 Leadership Group’s own aim to consult with, and support, leadership tasks across year groups;
- use community expertise and spirit to support students engaged in leadership tasks;
- facilitate community service initiatives that are innovative and present rich and challenging approaches to citizenship and leadership activities; and
- disseminate information about all aspects of the project in ways that would promote sustainability.

Important aspects of the CLIP approach in this context are the use of community expertise and spirit to broaden the practical knowledge base of students engaged in leadership tasks, and facilitated community service initiatives that provide rich and challenging approaches to citizenship and leadership activities. Key community groups involved in the programme included the Canberra Sunrise Rotary Club, the Northside Community Service, Amnesty International and the Canberra Raiders Rugby League Club.

Some of the key activities undertaken by the 2002 Year 10 Leadership Group (who were the first to really pilot the approach and hence convince the school to sustain it over time) were a peace action working group which developed links with East Timor, a student participation and active citizenship conference, and a ‘jeans for genes’ day where students raised funds for research into cot death. The most significant activity undertaken, however, was a drug and alcohol forum designed to address an issue of major significance for students at the school.

A core working group of seven students consulted widely with their peers across year levels regarding the impact of alcohol and other drugs on students’ lives and the community as a whole. They then used their research to develop a drug and alcohol discussion paper, which formed the basis for discussion at a community forum they arranged. The students managed enrolments for the forum, as well as general organisation and advertising, and succeeded in attracting 148 student, parent and community participants. Members of the group recorded the forum outcomes to inform the development of the school’s new drug and alcohol policy by staff.

Not all activities planned by the Leadership Group were successful – a proposed radio station for students failed to get off the ground – but these were seen as much as opportunities to learn as the more successful and high-profile events.

One interesting issue to emerge in the course of the CLIP programme was how to recognise and assess the quality of students’ work in undertaking their leadership tasks; especially since the focus tended to be on doing, rather than recording what happened and what was learned. In response, the school’s project officer developed a self-assessment sheet (which invited students to assess their contribution to particular projects as either ‘minimal’, ‘I did what was required’, ‘I did more than required’, or ‘I excelled in this task’) and a leadership journal which, together, enabled him to provide leadership certificates for outstanding contributors. These were presented at the annual Year 10 graduation dinner.

The success of the programme is evident in the findings of an independent evaluator from the University of Canberra that:

- it provided some students with a degree of freedom not fostered through mainstream curriculum;
- students had opportunities to plan and execute activities that many perceived as relevant to the needs of contemporary adolescents;
- some students developed leadership and organisational skills; and
• it provided an opportunity to show the wider community that students are able to organise and run projects.

The contribution of community partners was critical to this success because ‘they gave real-life relevance to the training … [and] students appeared to take more seriously the input from outsiders’.

The strategy of empowering Year 10 leaders to identify their own tasks to enact with the guidance of the project officer was ‘a powerful learning device in enabling them to develop their values’, though the strategy did ‘present problems in terms of the school understanding and acknowledging what the students had achieved’.

Perhaps the main concern that exists in this context is the feeling among many teachers in the school that the Leadership Group may have ‘suffered academically’ as the time taken in their projects took away from classroom learning. This is something that the school is seeking to address by linking the programme more clearly to other activities in the school. As the school itself explains, ‘Teaching staff have professional concerns about the loss of classroom time for students engaged in community-based learning that can enhance values education … [and] The issue is finding the right balance’.

**Preparing for the leadership role**

Two separate but arguably interrelated concerns that Year 10 leaders and other students expressed about their experience in 2002 have framed the development of the approach in subsequent years. More specifically, the feeling among:

• Year 10 leaders was that they were not fully prepared for their role in the school; and
• other students was that the selection of leaders was more a ‘popularity contest’ (with students actually running campaigns) than a serious role to adopt.

This is why the school, with the support of staff and students from the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT), shifted focus more towards citizenship, and introduced a two-day Building Citizenship programme for all students in Year 9 as a precursor for self-selected students to undertake four days of further training prior to Year 10; though this training subsequently was reduced in length in response to a loss of funding, which is discussed in more detail below.

The ‘leadership and citizenship model’ developed by the school, which forms the basis of training Year 9, is based on skills and personal qualities identified by students through a survey process as ‘most desirable’ for a leader to have. These in turn are clearly embodied in the school mission statement for citizenship:

To develop and sustain a caring and inclusive culture for all members of the Campbell High School Community.

We will do this by mentoring and by leading by example.

Campbell High School citizenship will be based on the principles of listening, communicating, supporting, encouraging, being responsible, being helpful and friendly, valuing diversity and practising inclusivity.
The actual training developed and delivered by CIT personnel then addressed the themes of building citizenship through self-esteem, inclusivity, developing and maintaining effective relationships, effective communication and citizenship. More specifically, it was designed to build understanding and skills in relation to:

- developing tolerance and acceptance;
- understanding and encouraging diversity;
- forming and maintaining effective relationships with peers and the community;
- helping and referring;
- building confidence and self-esteem;
- maintaining helpful attitudes and an open mind;
- listening and responding;
- dealing with difficult situations;
- managing and resolving conflict;
- building and developing resilience;
- leading and mentoring; and
- developing and maintaining community ties.

The structure of the course provided at this pilot stage of the programme comprised:

- a two-day conference at school on the last two days of Term 3. Year 9 classes were suspended and the conference followed an adult format with sessions generally involving a speaker who addressed the group as a whole, followed by activities relevant to that topic conducted in small groups led by community volunteers; and
- two separate two-day offsite camps in November and December to further explore citizenship and leadership concepts, trial activities to be used when mentoring Year 7 students, and select students who would be on the ballot paper for formal school captain and vice-captain positions.

All students were invited to attend the camps on a self-selection basis; approximately 25% of all Year 9 students chose to be involved.

The following aspects were crucial to the training’s success:

- participants were treated as adults with some conference-style facilitation and forums, along with requirements to register in advance and exercise choice of activities;
- conference sessions were based on themes identified through student surveying and research;
- the training involved a combination of experiential group work and keynote speaker sessions;
- there were aural, visual and kinaesthetic learning opportunities; and
- community members rather than teachers were used as speakers and facilitators.

The only setback to emerge since the revamped training occurred is the loss of funding for the part-time project officer. This has resulted in some curtailment of the programme, primarily manifest in a paring back of the training provided, and a focus for the Leadership Group on school tasks rather than those linked with community partners.

**A more streamlined approach**

As with many schools that have experienced reductions in resources, the consequent difficulties can be turned into an opportunity to revamp programmes in more efficient and effective ways.
Having lost the services of the project worker in 2003, the school realised that ‘it would not be practicable to work with community organisations and broad-scale projects, and instead focused on establishing a committee system within the Year 10 Leadership Group’.

Students were invited to nominate themselves for tasks and activities around the school, and joined committees that demonstrated democracy and citizenship in action. The committees were ‘very democratic, with decisions made by consensus and everyone present having an equal right to be heard’.

The committees had varying degrees of success in their first year, largely because there was only limited consideration of who would contribute best to each type of task. For example:

Students who had volunteered to set up for assemblies each fortnight were usually difficult to find when chairs needed to be set up, although students who ran the school’s front office on Fridays at recess were very reliable and effective in the role. No students were refused positions on any committees, but there was a high attrition rate as the year progressed.

In 2004, on the basis of this experience, the Year 10 coordinator and adviser have, together, ‘selected students for committees from the self-nominations made’. This has, the school reports, overcome some of last year’s problems by ensuring that committees were not so large as to be unwieldy and that individual students did not work on a large number of committees to the detriment of their studies. It also enabled sharing of the most prestigious positions (membership of the formal committee, Year 7 mentoring group and assistants for Year 7 camp), as well as matching students with tasks at which they could succeed and breaking up groupings which were unlikely to be effective.

While the two days of in-school Year 9 citizenship training in 2002 was considered very useful, the school did feel that the adult structure, which was so important to its success, was also too demanding for many students as it required an extended focus on concepts and paying attention to a number of talking heads. In addition, although speakers were chosen carefully for their task, several were ‘not sufficiently adept at tailoring their material to an adolescent audience’, with the result that a number of students who attended the first day were absent on the second.

The funding reduction did, in this context, offer as much of an opportunity as a threat, enabling the school to streamline the programme and reduce the formal sessions to a single day. As part of the new approach, the school also surveyed the Year 9 students and the Year 10 Leadership Group to canvass suggestions on people they would like to see as speakers. ‘Although many students seemed uneasy’, according to the school, ‘several useful suggestions were generated and the keynote speaker was one recommended by a student.’ Beyond this, informal small group discussions were held with most Year 9 students to focus on the characteristics of good leaders.

These relatively small changes proved ‘pedagogically significant as planning started from a position of acknowledging that all students have experienced good leadership and that the values which were important to them and on which the training day would focus were generated from the bottom up’. The school believes that these changes have given ‘the whole year group more of a sense of ownership of the day’.
On the day itself, the tone remained adult (with students still required to register on a form and catering being provided), but there was only one speaker – a paralympic silver medallist who opened the conference. The remainder of the day saw students rotating through workshops on the qualities that students identified as most important in leaders: communication skills, developing and maintaining effective relationships, and effective citizenship. These workshops were run by community members with extensive experience in working with young people, such as representatives of Lifeline and AXYS Youth Health Promotion Service, together with the members of the Year 10 Leadership Group.

This structure enabled community groups to establish links with the students at a ‘non-threatening/non-crisis time’, and to disseminate information about the services they offer. The tighter format also resulted in ‘more students devoting time to thinking about broadening their role in society and the skills they will need to make a useful contribution as citizens’.

The subsequent streamlined single (rather than two) two-day camp was conducted in a rural setting and focused on leadership and selecting ‘suitable students to stand as school captains and vice-captains for 2004’. Students had to complete an application form prior to attendance and, while no student was refused entry, some who initially expressed interest dropped by the wayside once they saw the level of commitment required and realised that not all would succeed in being selected for the leadership roles.

The final part of the student training puzzle was two days at the local college in December to support mentoring of Year 7 students. The programme was facilitated by the school’s SRC and leadership teacher and was designed to coach students in the activities planned for the mentoring programme and rehearsing ways of dealing with any problems that might arise.

**Extending to the curriculum**

A major curriculum emphasis at the school in 2004 is finding a way to further embed values in the curriculum and thereby ensure sustainability of the project in the absence of any external funding.

As the school itself explains:

> While we have successfully integrated a focus on citizenship, leadership and concomitant values into the meta-curriculum through our Year 7 mentoring, Year 9 course and the Year 10 Leadership Group, in addition to personal development classes in PE, the time is right to extend our efforts further.

Currently each school day commences with a Contact Group where the first roll is taken, daily notices read and general administration completed. Plans are now well underway to develop a 10-week pilot *Personal and Social Education* programme, which encompasses relationships, bullying and harassment, *MindMatters* units, study skills and programmes of particular relevance to particular years. Contact Group will, as part of this change, be renamed Care Group, to be run as a one-hour session once a week for the first five weeks of Terms 2 and 3 using teaching materials supplied by the school’s curriculum and health promotion committees. Such change will, the school believes, ‘extend the pastoral care role of most teachers and will strengthen our focus on values’.

The formal leadership days and camps will, it should be noted, continue along with the committee system for the Year 10 Leadership Group as they have been so successful. The *Personal and Social Education*
programme being piloted this year is intended ‘to take the values education concept further and to embed it in the curriculum for each year group’.

Parents have been very supportive of this overall approach and are keen to see it continue. A recurrent theme at both parents and citizens meetings and board meetings is, the school reports, ‘their appreciation of the opportunities that leadership and citizenship training create for their sons and daughters to focus on broad life skills’.

The school’s approach is consistent with:

- evaluation findings cited by the school that Year 9 and 10 students, and especially the Year 10 leaders, ‘develop values as part of the transition from being focused on self to focusing on others as they move through adolescence’;
- the school’s own belief that values education is inextricably linked with the development of active citizenship, which, in turn, benefits greatly from the involvement of the broader community; and
- the students’ own expressed desire to focus on a clear definition of what constitutes a leader, group work skills, communication skills and time management.

It ultimately reflects the fact that Campbell High School’s formal values education programme, in the school’s own words, ‘works on an explicitly agreed set of values generated by the students after critically reflecting on the world around them … [and] The school’s experience has been that the students’ values reflect broad societal values that apply’.

And while much of the programme will really take effect only in the longer term, one important short-term gain already has been ‘strengthening a sense of community within the Year 9 and Year 10 groups’.
Cherbourg State School

Strong and smart
Strong and smart at Cherbourg State

The Aboriginal community school at Cherbourg, approximately 300 kilometres north-west of Brisbane, aims to:

- generate good academic outcomes for its 250 students from kindergarten to Year 7, ‘comparable to any other school throughout Queensland’; and
- nurture a strong and positive sense of what it means to be Aboriginal in today’s society.

In a context where the community continues to grapple with many sociological issues borne of the historical processes of dispossession and disempowerment, Cherbourg State School is determined that its children can and will learn to become ‘strong and smart’.

It is a journey that has been charted by the school’s first and current Aboriginal principal in the Quality Teaching Series paper *Young and Black and Deadly: Strategies for Improving Outcomes for Indigenous Students*, which describes how pride and high expectations were engendered in the school over a four-year period from 1998.2

**Human values in education**

A crucial component of the school’s pursuit of its ‘strong and smart’ motto, which anchors everything that occurs in the school, including attendance and academic performance, has been the introduction of the *Human Values in Education* programme across all year levels. And the intention is that the programme ultimately will move beyond the school to have a positive impact on the Cherbourg community as well.

*Human Values in Education*, introduced in consultation with all members of the school community, was a direct response to very poor levels of student behaviour, attendance and academic performance in the school. It is specifically designed to:

- develop a supportive and more productive school environment for all students and staff;
- assist students to develop improved self-esteem through getting to know and understand themselves better;
- assist students to develop a better and more accurate sense of cultural identity; and
- assist students and the community to develop a more productive means to determine appropriate human responses to real-life situations.

The programme is drawn from a framework developed by Sathya Sai schools, which operate around the world, and is anchored in the five core human values of love, peace, right conduct, non-violence and truth.3

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3 In a Sathya Sai school, values education is taught in two ways. The first is integration of values with extracurricular school activities. The second is a direct method, which uses instructional techniques to teach one of the five human values.
The long-term objective of pursuing these values through the programme is, according to the school, ‘to ensure that at their very core, students from Cherbourg State School will be strong enough and smart enough to access society in the same way that any other human being would’ – and there is strong agreement in the school that such a values programme ‘could have a significant impact upon negative student behaviour as well as the development of greatly enhanced student self-esteem and cultural identity’.

**Consistency across the school**

All teachers, teacher aides and other staff, including administrative, personnel and grounds staff, were given in-service training on the programme, reflecting the school’s insistence that it ‘be delivered consistently right across the whole school by everyone who was involved with the school’. As the school’s principal has explained:

> I ensured that everyone on staff, from teachers to cleaners, was involved in the values in education project. It was never going to be the sort of programme that could be implemented in just some part of the school. Everyone at the school had to be aware that, if we were teaching values, then we had to model them as well. It would be impossible to have successful implementation of the programme if just some members of the school team were modelling what was being taught.

In this context, the programme also was promoted to the community by placing the ‘value of the week’ in the school newsletter and through discussion about the weekly values on local community radio. A number of parents attended a workshop on the programme, which was very well received and, although the school would have liked more parents to be involved, favourable follow-up discussion did occur with those who did not attend.

Several resources were acquired to support the programme and the school will make posters about the programme values to distribute to parents for display in their homes. These posters will be designed by students, and a professional photographer will be hired to take photos of children to include in the posters, which eventually will be published.

Staff have worked to ensure that the *Human Values in Education* programme is embedded in the school’s curriculum framework so it is seen as ‘an integral part of the school’s curriculum and not just a one-off programme’. This should help ensure that it also is maintained and enhanced over time.

Teachers then ensure delivery of the programme through a range of consistent pedagogies in all classrooms, comprising:

- silent sitting – in which students effectively ‘meditate’ on the values of the week;
- quote – where teachers find, or make up for class discussion, a quote or saying that relates to the value being studied (eg good manners cost nothing, but are worth a lot), which is reinforced through the week by teachers and students using it whenever appropriate;
- group activity – where teachers instigate a classroom activity relating to the value of the week, such as role-plays, poems, collages and so on;
- music – which sees the music teacher writing and recording songs together with students about the value of the week; and
- story – where the teacher reads a story relating to the value of the week and leads a related and meaningful discussion on it (eg the boy who cried wolf in relation to ‘truth’).
All staff meet each term to map out the values of the week for the entire term. This both directs teachers in relation to classroom activities and allows administrative and grounds staff to know the values to reinforce with children around the school.

That said, the school acknowledges that it initially erred in trying to introduce the programme while assuming that all would ‘get on board’. The reality was that ‘some teachers embraced it enthusiastically, while others really struggled to implement it into the classroom’. This was, however, eventually dealt with by appointing a values-in-education coordinator to drive the programme across the entire school. This coordinator is also able to ‘detect which teachers need support and provide it when and where required’.

**Some dramatic effects**

*Human Values in Education*, together with other explicit reward-based student attendance strategies that involve constant reinforcement of the message that being ‘young and black and deadly’ means coming to school each day, has contributed to a 94% reduction in unexplained absences. As the school itself explains, all children ‘understand that if they want to be strong and smart then they must act strong and smart and that this must be reflected in their attendance as well’. Central to this have been efforts to teach the children about ‘cooperating with each other, not teasing, respecting everyone around them and respecting themselves’.

The programme has, the school reports, also contributed to a stronger and more positive sense of Aboriginal identity, especially in relation to the notion of ‘building greater pride in being Aboriginal’. There also has been evident academic progress reflected in the results of diagnostic tests in Year 2 where an initial figure of 87% of students failing to meet expected literacy standards has been more than halved to 42%; and the school expects this figure to improve further in the near future ‘to the extent that our school is better than the entire state average’.

To top off this series of dramatic gains due to the comprehensive range of strategies adopted by the school, parent and student satisfaction has improved markedly in relevant surveys collected, as has staff morale. More specifically, the surveys have revealed student and staff feelings in relation to a range of values-related and learning domains, as set out below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Student views</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most students believe that the impact of the values education programme at the school in each of the listed domains is as follows.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Academic behaviour</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- They can work longer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They can learn things faster.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Children are getting smarter.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Student behaviour

- Their teacher doesn’t have to tell them what to do so much.
- They feel safer playing in the playground.
- The classroom is quieter now.
- Children follow classroom rules more often.
- The classroom is a calmer place to be.

Interpersonal skills

- They are better than they used to be.
- They like trying new things.
- They are more likely to finish assignments.
- They are better at getting their work finished.
- Children don’t get as angry as they used to.
- Children wait in lines better.
- They more often do their best work.
- They tell the truth more often.

Social skills

- Students get along better.
- Children don’t fight as much.
- They do more things in the community.
- They hear the words ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ more often.
- The school grounds are cleaner.
- Other children show them more respect now.
- There is less graffiti on the school grounds.
- Children are better at taking turns.
- People use their manners more.
- People listen better.
- Classmates get along better.

Staff views

Most staff believe that the impact of the values education programme at the school in each of the listed domains is as follows.

Academic performance

- Children are more receptive to learning.
- Children are better able to stay focused on tasks.
- Children grasp academic concepts faster.
- Children’s academic results have improved.
- Children are getting smarter.
Values Education in Action

Cherbourg State School

Theme 2

For all of this array of anecdotal data, however, the school does in retrospect feel ‘it would have been better establishing some baseline data … so that we could get a better insight into the scope of the change. We have been able to quantify some of the change [as outlined above], but … with better baseline data established, we could have done this a lot better’.

Nevertheless, the school has little doubt from its experience to date that the programme, which forms part of the school’s overall efforts to consolidate its strong and smart vision, create high expectations and value Indigenous staff and community members, has ‘contributed to a significant improvement … and we believe it is bound to have a positive impact on the entire community. We all enjoy being part of a school that teaches children to stand up for themselves, to be strong and smart, and to be nice human beings to each other. We have also enjoyed the very personal journeys that we had to make as individuals when we realised that you just can’t teach positive human values without living them’.

Student behaviour

- They send fewer children to the office for behaviour issues.
- Playground behaviour has improved.
- They are more confident that behaviour will be appropriate on excursions.
- The classroom is quieter when teaching.
- Children more often follow classroom rules.
- The classroom is a calmer place to be.

Intrapersonal skills – children

- They are more confident to speak in front of the class.
- They are more confident at tasks.
- They are more likely to take risks with learning.
- They are more likely to work independently.
- They are more likely to complete assignments.
- They complete independent work to a higher standard.
- They have greater control over their emotions.
- They show more patience towards others.
- They show greater leadership skills.
- They are more likely to tell the truth.
- They will reflect on their work.

Social skills – children

- They resolve conflict in a more peaceful manner.
- They participate more often in community activities.
- They use the words ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ more often.
- They are more likely to help their classmates.
- They keep the school grounds cleaner.
- They show more respect for others’ opinions.
- They are more likely to take turns.
- They use values in their actions.
- They use better listening skills in the classroom.
- They work more cooperatively.
- They are more likely to use manners around adults.
The \textit{Human Values in Education} programme has, the school explains, ‘dovetailed perfectly into our school’s overall direction and vision’:

In our school all of our students know that everything that goes on is all about being ‘Strong and smart … young and black and deadly’.

The values programme provides a means to reinforce this at a very personal level for each individual in our school … including staff members. Many of our children face extremely complex circumstances in their lives. The values lessons they learn in school provide them with the means to understand and believe that they are strong and smart, they are young and black and deadly, and despite what goes on around them, they know that deep down, they are equipped to fight on, and they know they ‘truly deserve’ to win in the game of life.

\section*{Reaching out}

The school now intends to build on the programme to date by further engaging its community through:

- regularly faxing the local community council and other community agencies about the value of the week so it is shared through the community;
- continuing discussion of the programme as a whole, and the value of the week in particular, through the school newsletter and community radio;
- erecting a sign at the corner of the school grounds to display the value of the week to passers-by; and
- developing a DVD on the programme and its operation at the school which also can be shared with other schools.

Its next great challenge is, it explains, ‘to get the values in education programme out into the community, so that parents and grandparents in homes are having conversations about positive values with their children in the same way that we are doing at school’. This does, however, need to be done carefully, and certainly not in a patronising, or ‘we know best’, way. The school is, therefore, at pains to say … that we as a school DO NOT see ourselves as the means by which to inject positive values into the local community. We acknowledge wholeheartedly that positive values already exist. Our efforts are designed simply to provide mechanisms with which to articulate the positive values that exist.

We plan to get positive human values onto the family agenda in a range of ways. These include newsletters outlining what are the values being taught in school for the week, activities that will see students engaged in community activities that reflect the values we are learning (eg cleaning up the garden at the old people’s home to demonstrate ‘respect’). In addition to this, the school has engaged a project officer two days per fortnight to conduct parent workshops that are anchored by the values in education programme.
A positive values framework for all

Participation in the *Values Education Study* has reinforced rather than changed the school’s perception about the importance of positive values in education, particularly as a counter to racism that still does exist. As the school principal cogently explained in his case study report:

Having been subjected to institutional racism in schools and having observed it on too many occasions as an Aboriginal educator, I have always suspected that we should be doing much better.

We live in a country where we think we have this notion of ‘fair go mate’, but we see many things, particularly more recently ... actions that suggest a contradiction between what we say and what we do. I believe schools can play a lead role in nurturing a true sense of what a fair go means, by providing children with a positive values framework with which to make decisions about their everyday lives.

The processes undertaken and subsequently embedded within school practice, together with the results yielded to date, have also reinforced for the school the notion that values in education are an integral part of every school’s curriculum and philosophical framework. ‘Of course values exist in every aspect of our lives and of our students’ lives. It is necessary, however, to articulate positive values in a much more explicit way.’

This also means, of course, that something like the values education project is never actually complete:

To this end, the *Human Values in Education* programme is firmly embedded within our school’s curriculum framework, and will remain there for many years to come. Values education is not something that is discrete, and can be simply started and stopped ... It is something that exists in every aspect of a human being’s life, and therefore needs constant attention and nurturing in a positive way.

The school has, in this context, encouraged other educators to come and see what is happening in its classrooms and has challenged them to attend to the need for such processes in their own schools. This reflects the school view that there are, for young people, ‘many fights to be fought’, and that

we, as educators, play a significant role in arming them for such fights.

We can continue to arm them, by default, through our lack of responsiveness, direction and compassion, with more anger and frustration ... or we can explicitly teach AND MODEL positive human values so that they are more suitably armed with intellectual, psychological and spiritual integrity.
Theme 2

Matthew Hogan School

Character and service
Character and service at Matthew Hogan School

Matthew Hogan School is an independent high school registered by the New South Wales Board of Studies. It is also part of one of 17 programmes administered by the non-denominational charity Youth Off The Streets.

The school teaches the NSW high school curriculum to disadvantaged youth ‘at risk’ aged 12 to 18 years in a classroom situation appropriate to their educational level. The students, who are on remand, have been expelled from other schools in the State, have such violent and abusive behaviours that they do not last in mainstream schools, and/or have been so badly abused that they are almost incapable of sustaining a healthy, normal relationship with others. All have individual learning plans, which are regularly reviewed and adjusted as required.

The general environment is non-threatening, non-confronting and highly supportive, and there is a choice of educational programmes according to students’ prior learning. Teachers use positive reinforcements and rewards, and regular feedback is given to provide motivation and develop responsibility for students’ own learning and development.

Teachers within the school are committed to ensuring that each student achieves the highest level possible, and consult regularly with other, relevant community bodies such as the Departments of Community Services, Juvenile Justice and Police.

The six pillars of the programme

The school’s values-based approach is premised on teaching the ‘six pillars of character’:

- responsibility and self-control;
- cooperation and teamwork;
- respect and appreciation of diversity;
- trustworthiness;
- fairness and justice; and
- caring.

It also crucially involves an opportunity for the young people to participate in a defined service learning experience, which enables them to put these core values into practice in concrete ways.

Central to the whole programme is a strengths-based approach to interventions that recognises that ‘feeling good about oneself’ is an important component of a happy, productive life. The focus, in this context, is on students’ strengths rather than weaknesses and helping them to develop a sense of power, rather than helplessness. As the school itself explains, ‘we do not exclusively dwell on deficits – we cultivate gifts and strengths’.
Service learning in action

Service learning is taught in the school in six two-week units over twelve weeks, with each character trait studied for one of the two-week blocks.

Each weekly session follows a structured format comprising:

- definition of the trait;
- exposure to pro-social examples;
- discussion of examples and non-examples;
- a hands-on, guided practice activity;
- a reflection designed to enhance generalisation; and
- a method of assessing youth learning.

The actual service learning project undertaken through the programme then provides the opportunity for the young people to learn and develop through active participation in a thoughtfully designed service experience that meets an actual community need. It is, as the school describes it, ‘a process of self-discovery’ where students experience ‘success in helping others … [and] learn to view themselves differently, recognising they have gifts which are of value to others’. This ‘nurture[s] feelings of pride and positive self-esteem’, and young people begin to ‘view themselves as capable of challenges which they had never before thought were within their reach’.

Above all, service learning and its associated character education helps young people understand, care about and act upon ethical values. It is integrated into the students’ academic curriculum and provides structured time for them to think, talk or write about the experiences they have had.

A four-step process

The conduct of the service learning project comprises four defined steps.

Step 1: Identifying the project
Students and staff brainstorm community needs that will lead to a motivating and relevant project for both the community and the students themselves. Such projects can be:

- direct activities that require personal contact with the recipient of the service, such as tutoring, mentoring or visiting;
- indirect activities where students participate in a project that does not involve contacting people directly, such as fundraising, clean-up or construction; or
- advocacy activities that involve raising public awareness of an issue or problem through such strategies as speaking, performing or lobbying.

Step 2: Planning and preparing the project
This involves all members of the school learning community answering the following questions.

- What do we know already about the need and topic area?
- What do we need to know?
- How can we gain this information?
- How can we involve the service recipients in the planning?
During this phase the team focuses on its goals, the people involved, the overall issues to be addressed, the necessary skills, and troubleshooting any problems. There is also an opportunity for some reflection so the students can examine their beliefs about the individuals who will be project recipients, and any preconceptions or attitudes that may impact upon the project.

**Step 3: Implementing the project**
This occurs under appropriate supervision, with continual dialogue and a focus on the desired outcomes and participant strengths. There will, the school explains, be many opportunities for ‘teachable moments ... and regular reflection lets students share highlights, ask questions, solve problems, receive feedback and gain insights’. It is during this phase that young people’s strengths really emerge and are enhanced, ‘especially if the identified project is a good match’.

**Step 4: Completing the project**
This step includes both a celebration of achievements and formal reflection on the overall experience. Reflection is particularly important at this stage and involves asking the following questions.

- What differences have I really made?
- What have I learned about myself and others?
- What academic skills did I receive from this experience?
- How can this experience help me in the future?

Throughout the project students keep a journal where they are required to document the material they discuss in meetings, activities they participate in and their feelings about the process and the project as a whole.

**Responsibility and care**

The first service learning project initiated by students at Matthew Hogan School was to raise funds for three orphanages in East Timor. The project included organising a trip where students lived at one of the orphanages for several days and visited others in the area. During the trip they also presented money they had raised, along with musical instruments, sporting equipment and toys.

At a practical level, the students’ activities have meant that children in the Baguia Orphanage now have three meals a day instead of one, and access to a range of resources such as an electric keyboard, games and guitars. The money donated will be used to improve the lives of the orphans, as will the ongoing sponsorship of US$40 a month. The experience of having the students visit the community was, the school reports, ‘brilliant; they provided so much enjoyment and fun for the children. The orphans’ faces lit up every time they saw the Australians’.

Teachers also have observed that the students involved in the project have learned ‘to be more responsible for their actions, to solve problems, to care for another person, and to get along with different people from oneself through direct participation and collaboration in community service projects’.

On return to Australia, the students involved evaluated the first stage of their project and considered whether:

- they wished to continue to expand their relationship with either Baguia or other orphanages in East Timor and how they would do this; or
- they would work with a different community on a different project.
They also developed a public speaking tour to inform other schools, community groups and youth organisations about the results of the project and their experiences. This has, the school has noted, provided ‘a valuable opportunity for students to reflect on their feelings and emotions … [and] a wonderful way for the wider community to become involved in the experience’.

Perhaps the only drawback of note is that even more value still may have been gained from the project if, on their visit to East Timor, the students had been accompanied by a staff member who was more familiar with the local language. The school would like to connect with a tutor for Tetum language in future. The only criticism to come from the students involved was, in fact, the affirming comment that they would have liked to have spent more time in the villages to further extend the whole experience from their point of view.

The whole process proved, according to the school, ‘invaluable in developing various values and was indeed a life changing experience for the students, staff and wider community’. More specifically, the students

were required to fundraise and plan, which developed their communication skills and encouraged them to be responsible and reliable. It took great courage for them to fly and live in East Timor as it required them to leave their comfort zone. They also needed to work as a team while planning the project and visiting the orphanage. They were challenged to develop their empathy skills as they spent time with people from another country. The experience was beneficial as it put their own lives into perspective and allowed them to realise how lucky they really are.

The impact is clearly manifest in the following student observations.

- ‘I met a street kid whose arm had been shot up and then amputated. It was a really sad moment for me.’
- ‘We might have problems, but there are some people out there far worse. I can make a difference and all I have to do is apply myself.’
- ‘When I wake up in the morning I worry about what to wear, they worry about what to eat. This experience has taught me about having (and not having), learning and generosity.’
- ‘Don’t take anything for granted. What I have is awesome compared to them.’

On a subsequent trip a different group of students spent time in the capital, Dili, working with street kids. Again this proved to be a ‘life changing experience’ which ‘fostered empathy, communication, negotiation and courage skills’.

Three other projects at various stages of development and implementation in the school as a result of the success of this trial are a proposed Berrima River Clean-Up, Rescuing Wild Brumbies and a Running for Those Who Can’t camp for disabled children.

The Walking in My Shoes camp, for instance, reinforced the focus on responsibility and care by teaming up to two youths (called ‘companions’) with one child with a disability for the entire camp; the fact that the camp was 24 hours a day meant that the students had to be involved in all aspects of care. This led one student to write that ‘I learned patience, negotiation and mentoring skills through this experience … My advice to others taking on this kind of project is patience and commitment – Go hard or go home (do it 100%)’. This sort of message was only reinforced by pre-camp training, which gave students the opportunity to role-play and practise different support strategies. The training addressed the values the students hold and allowed them to develop their empathy skills.
As with the East Timor project, this activity had clear benefits for the recipients of the service as much as for the students involved in providing it. The parents and families of the children with disabilities ‘benefited hugely as a result of the camp … They were able to take three days of valuable respite. They deserve some time away from their demanding roles as caregivers and would be rested and better able to care as a result’.

In the Rescuing Wild Brumbies project, students spent months working with ‘their’ horses, taking responsibility for feeding and grooming as a means of enhancing their feelings of responsibility and their nurturing skills. The fact that the horses would not respond to force meant that students needed to ‘earn the horse’s trust and respect’ and constantly evaluate the environment and the moment to respond appropriately and effectively at the time. As with the camp for disabled students, individuals noted that they ‘learnt that with patience all things are possible’, and gained skills which the school believes ‘will benefit them in the future as they apply them to relationships with carers, teachers, employees and friends’.

The local community has been very supportive of all this activity, both in terms of fundraising and with local volunteers taking an interest in individual students to keep them motivated in their tasks.

Learning through life

The whole experience at Matthew Hogan has demonstrated to staff that students gain valuable learning experiences ‘through actually living’. They were, the school explains, ‘forced to examine their values as situations arose. They were faced with huge challenges each day, which made them look at themselves and at society. This experiential learning had a huge impact on students, especially those who do not respond as well to formal classroom education’. They are, the school concluded, ‘learning without realising it and because the experiences are so meaningful, the lessons last a lifetime’.

This is evident in the anecdotal observations of teachers, carers and the students themselves, who all have noted that the students ‘seem more mature, more responsible, more confident and capable since participating in one or more of these [service learning] programmes’. The following comments from students offer some very heartening evidence of success.

- ‘It makes a significant impact on the way you run your own life. It’s not always easy, but if you work hard as a team, it will happen.’
- ‘I know that I can push myself further now and that sometimes it’s good to step outside your comfort zone.’
- ‘My opinion about myself has changed because I didn’t think I could do something so difficult.’

Many of the students at the school have had very challenging lives, and these projects allowed them to see that there are people in the world less fortunate than themselves and that there is a bigger picture which always helps put our own lives in perspective. This is readily seen in the following vignette provided by the school from the wild brumbies project (which was the subject of a documentary called Wild Horses, Wild Kids, screened on Channel 9 during February 2004), and its impact on students’ relationships and behaviours:

[Students] had been in the habit of resorting to violence to solve problems. By working with the horses they broke the cycle of aggression. By working with expert horse trainer, Greg Powell, they realised that there are many parallels between horses and humans. The students report that they
could suddenly see that it is possible, with thought and patience, to find a way to connect with anyone. They said they felt empowered knowing that you can use empathy to find a common ground with people who you don’t normally get along with. Their aggressive behaviour decreased as a result of the project. They also felt really respected and trusted by the horses, which made them feel proud. One of the students had been used to standing over people to get what he wanted. Working with the brumbies taught him that you can actually negotiate without force.

Greg Powell said in the documentary … ‘These kids are blossoming before my eyes, showing promise that was previously hidden’.

Beyond all this, attendance in all three programmes was ‘fantastic’, suggesting to the school that ‘when trusted, students seemed to rise to the occasion’; attending enthusiastically and displaying new levels of reliability, maturity and thoughtfulness.

**Stronger relationships**

Staff who accompanied students to East Timor in particular have forged a very strong bond with students. This in turn has ‘brought them closer together, given them something in common to reminisce about and put them on equal ground’. In a somewhat similar vein, the staff working with students in the Rescuing Wild Brumbies project reported that they were able to ‘motivate students to focus on all aspects of the curriculum as a result of the project’; especially as it extends teaching outside the classroom and into the wider community.

Each of the projects also helped extend knowledge of the school, and its students’ positive capacities, in the local community.

The experience in East Timor, for instance, helped the local community to understand what students at Matthew Hogan were studying. As the school explains it:

> The fundraising forced the students to talk at school assemblies, sell tickets at shopping centres, drop off pamphlets and contact service clubs and, as a result, the community gained insight to the valuable learning programme.

At the other end of the spectrum, ‘numerous members of the public approached the Matthew Hogan students to enquire about the camp (for students with disabilities); and Channel 9’s screening of Wild Horses, Wild Kids allowed the wider community to understand the benefit of a programme that explored such values as ‘commitment, respect, teamwork and conflict resolution’.

Certainly the whole experience has convinced the school that ‘values need to be addressed directly and practised regularly’:

> We cannot assume that students will just learn these along the way. Our students benefited from the opportunity to discuss values which may be different from the ones held by their own families. They benefited from the opportunity to discuss where people’s values come from and how they affect thoughts and behaviours. They now have realised that values are an integral part of their lives.
Kits for other schools

Matthew Hogan School is the first to acknowledge that its situation is somewhat unusual and certainly different from many other schools:

We appreciate that due to our small class sizes we did not have the challenge which mainstream schools would face of selecting who could be involved in these projects. Our criteria involved attending the service learning lessons, commitment to study and, of course, a drug-free lifestyle.

We were also lucky because Sir William Deane donated the original airfares to East Timor.

Students live in residence so we had the added advantage of extra time outside school hours for fundraising and planning.

That said, the school also feels it has much to contribute to other schools interested in a service learning approach and, in particular, activities that ‘stimulate other youth to get up and put life into values’.

It has, accordingly, sought funding to allow the school to develop a teacher-friendly kit with easy-to-use lesson plans that address values education and service learning as vital aspects of the school curriculum, using the ‘six pillars of character’ as their base.

More specifically, the school has pursued a corporate partnership with AMP to produce a teaching resource kit called Youth Making a Difference, which was launched by the Commonwealth Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Dr Brendan Nelson MP, at the Youth Off The Streets conference in November last year.

The kit, which is being sold to schools and youth groups, is a direct response to approaches to the school in light of ‘the huge success of our service learning projects’, seeking assistance to implement similar projects in other settings. It includes:

- a section on service learning with case studies on the projects at Matthew Hogan School;
- a section on values education and its links to action to assist the community; and
- specific lesson plans on honesty, reliability, cooperation, teamwork, leadership, communication, citizenship, integrity, conflict resolution, courage, empathy, justice and tolerance.

Other schools can, it is suggested, use the sample lessons and topics across the curriculum in ways that ‘may mean that two or three values can be covered at each stage each year … [so that] Each graduate will have experienced a variety of values education throughout their schooling’.

The school is also planning to:

- produce another teaching resource that will focus on empathy, which the school feels is imperative for students to develop ‘as it will allow them to communicate more effectively and resolve conflict efficiently’. This new resource will include a story written and narrated by Shianne Eagleheart (a native American Indian), *The Wounded Bear*, which demonstrates that ‘everyone has a story to tell and that we are all products of our experiences’; and
- investigate the possibility of modifying its values education lessons for primary school classes as well.
Beyond this, the school is planning a return trip to East Timor to allow more students the opportunity to practise what they have learned in their values education sessions, and will continue to build on its overall service learning approach.

Perhaps the whole approach is, however, summed up in the fact that the school is a Health Promoting School ‘which recognises that what is taught in the classroom must be reinforced within the community. We will’, they have concluded, ‘continue to support our students to reach out and help others, and to explore learning experiences which promote skills such as empathy, communication and non-violence.’
Theme 3: Ensuring values are incorporated into teaching programmes across the key learning areas

- Taking stock at Pedare Christian College
  Pedare Christian College, South Australia

- Head, heart and hands at Lance Holt
  Lance Holt School, Western Australia

- Retaining young people at Alice Springs High
  Alice Springs High School, Northern Territory

- A Tribes community at Albany Primary
  Albany Primary School, Western Australia
Taking stock at Pedare Christian College

The values that students hold dear can provide, according to Pedare Christian College, an insight into their deeply felt needs, and hence the nature of the pastoral support they ought receive.

This relatively new R–12 independent coeducational college, established in 1986 as a joint venture between the Anglican and Uniting Churches, and located in the north-eastern suburbs of Adelaide, maintains strong Christian principles but, until the Values Education Study, had not really checked their alignment to what students actually feel.

To rectify this situation, the school administered the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) Attitudes and Values Questionnaire, specifically developed for use in Christian and Catholic schools, before embarking on the implementation of the MindMatters personal development programme as part of its overall approach to pastoral care.

As the school itself explained, ‘The values audit will help to determine where our students are at, and provide us with a better sense of direction as to how best meet their needs’. In effect, then, it was an attempt to ‘measure objectively the espoused values of the student community at Pedare Christian College ... [to] help us identify strengths and/or weaknesses in the self-confidence, self-esteem and resiliency of the young adolescents who are educated at Pedare’.

It also would serve to evaluate the extent to which the school community is succeeding in conveying ‘positive and ethical approaches in their own lives, demonstrating self-responsibility, moral fortitude and respect for others through recognition of social justice issues’.

In the longer term, it is expected that the results of the survey will promote discussion and evaluation of the effectiveness of the school’s approach to values education and pastoral care, and enable the school to respond to identified gaps while building on its strengths.

A survey for the Christian context

The ACER Attitudes and Values Questionnaire, which provided the school with the baseline data needed for its more detailed exploration of values education and pastoral care, gathers basic biographical information from students and then responses to statements related to the values of:

- conscience;
- compassion;
- emotional growth;
- service to others;
- commitment to God; and
- commitment to Jesus.
Some of the flavour of the responses related to these six areas can be gained from the following sample of statements in the questionnaire:

- **conscience** – ‘I would feel bad if I had stolen something’ and ‘If I found a wallet with identification I would try to find the owner’;
- **compassion** – ‘It concerns me that so many people are unable to find employment in this country’ and ‘If people are in difficult circumstances they have only themselves to blame’;
- **emotional growth** – ‘If I believe in something I will speak out even if it makes me unpopular’ and ‘If I have made a mistake I try to learn from it’;
- **service to others** – ‘I feel good when I’m kind to somebody’ and ‘I find it hard to get upset about the problems of people I don’t know’; and
- **commitment to God and Jesus** – ‘I believe that God cares about each of us’ and ‘I think that Jesus’ teachings are irrelevant to today’s world’.

The school administered the survey to all students in Years 7, 8, 10 and 12, during lesson time in week six of first term 2003 under the supervision of class teachers, and will re-survey students in another two years to enable it to track data against cohort groups.

Completed questionnaires were returned to ACER for collation and analysis, and a comprehensive report was prepared for the school. The report included some results that surprised the school and need to be taken into account in future curriculum and values education planning, such as:

- the fact that students’ attendance at church was below expectations, with 61% indicating that they never go to church – which prompted the school to re-examine the role of church in its young adolescents’ lives; and
- on the other side of the coin, the pleasing discovery that the school’s students rated slightly higher than the mean for all schools in relation to the values dimension of emotional growth, reflecting favourably perhaps on the caring and supportive approach to pastoral care.

While the school did point to some issues of terminology that may have impacted slightly on the overall outcomes, it concluded that the data ‘does reflect the values perspectives of our students and have helped to focus our attention for personal development planning’. However, in hindsight, it would have liked also to explore ‘more questions which focused on family and friendship relationships, thereby seeking to measure community commitment and development and the importance and effect of these on adolescent attitudes, values and behaviour’.

Looked at overall, the conduct of the survey and subsequent analysis of outcomes created the opportunity for broad discussion in the school community about the delivery of values education, including an evaluation of the effectiveness of existing programmes and their capacity to meet the needs of the student body as a whole. This in turn provided an appropriate context to consider new initiatives targeted at promoting the school’s values across the curriculum.

As the school itself put it, ‘The ACER values survey served to highlight areas of values education that we need to address and to confirm our desire to evaluate the effectiveness of existing programmes in order to address the needs of all students’.

It has not, in this context, changed the school’s view of the importance of values education, but it has ‘strengthened the development of new initiatives for promotion of values across the curriculum – in teaching programmes as well as in pastoral care’.
A raft of initiatives

Having undertaken and analysed the survey, and identified areas of weakness and strength, the school initiated a raft of activities, primarily related to *MindMatters*, to improve values education in the school.

The *MindMatters* programme is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and conducted by the Australian Principals Association’s Professional Development Council and Curriculum Corporation. It grew out of a successful national pilot mental health promotion programme in 1997 and 1998, which involved 24 schools from all sectors. *MindMatters* uses a whole school approach to mental health promotion and suicide prevention, and aims to enhance the development of secondary school environments where young people feel safe, valued, engaged and purposeful. This reflects the fact that social and emotional wellbeing have been linked to young people’s schooling outcomes, their social development, and their capacity to contribute to the workforce and the community, as well as to reducing the rate of youth suicide.

*MindMatters*, which is being adopted by Pedare and its community as a means of taking positive action to create a climate of mental as well as physical health, includes:

- a resource for schools;
- a national professional development and training strategy;
- a dedicated website (http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/);
- an evaluation process; and
- a quarterly newsletter.

The school’s desire for the programme to form the centrepiece of its continuing values education approach was stimulated by the results of the survey it conducted with students, and is explained by the school in the following terms:

Values education has always been a prominent focus of the Christian ethos of the college, but this project has enabled us to determine where best to incorporate the delivery of this material so that it meets the needs of the students more effectively; and in a planned and structured manner, rather than assuming it is delivered only through the *Christian Life* curriculum, the pastoral care programme, or through the modelling of our Christian staff.

The school initiatives that flowed from this strong research and planning base have comprised:

- initial implementation of the *MindMatters* programme within the pastoral care structure for Years 8 to 12, with particular emphasis on delivering units from *Enhancing Resilience 1* and *Enhancing Resilience 2*;
- in-service training of pastoral care staff leaders, the Christian Life coordinator and community coordinators, as well as most of the Years 6 and 7 teachers in the two-day introductory programme for *MindMatters*;
- in-service training of all secondary teaching staff and the student welfare officer with a one-day introduction to *MindMatters*;
- incorporating the *Loss and Grief* unit from *MindMatters* into the Year 8 *Christian Life* programme as well as studying contemporary issues in the Years 9–12 *Christian Life* curriculum;
- completion of a mapping exercise by secondary teaching staff to establish:
  - the values education topics, as outlined in the *MindMatters* programme, that they already teach
within their learning areas; and
– the best place to locate *MindMatters* material within learning areas and/or in the pastoral care
programme;
• initial efforts to incorporate selected topics from *MindMatters* in Years 6 and 7 classes;
• the college becoming a *Drug Education Strategy* school, which involves in-service training of a
committee of staff, students and parents to implement drug and alcohol education into the
curriculum, R–12;
• reviewing the content of the school’s community-based pastoral care lessons with a consequent
change to the *Learning, Issues, Fun and Friendship, and Empathy* (LIFE) programme to incorporate
values education and community service in a more structured way;
• increasing the role of Year 11 peer support leaders to include preparation and delivery of chapel
presentations with the Year 8 students in their care – ‘with a particular Christian focus’;
• introducing the national anthem and Lord’s Prayer within each college assembly to ‘promote a
sense of belonging and Christian practice’;
• introducing middle schooling for Years 6 to 9 and the *International Baccalaureate Middle Years
Programme* to ‘better address the needs of our young adolescents’;
• attendance by pastoral care staff at various state and national forums on values education, such as
conferences on bullying and harassment and how to deal with these;
• experiential visits to local parishes and churches as part of the *Christian Life* programme;
• visits from outreach groups and guest speakers to assemblies to deliver ‘messages with a Christian
focus and service to the community’; and
• review of the school’s bullying and harassment policy initiated and to be completed this year.

As a result of all this activity, which touches all areas and programmes of the school, ‘we have’, the
school argues, ‘raised the awareness of all teachers in terms of the contribution they can make in values
development within the classroom’.

**Extending to the classroom**

According to the school, the values education project undertaken at Pedare Christian College has

had a particular impact on the promotion of discussion among the teaching staff in order to
address any changes necessary to our delivery of values education; to evaluate the effectiveness of
existing pastoral programmes; and to determine how best to meet the needs of our student body in
regard to the implementation of the *MindMatters* programme and similar initiatives targeting the
promotion and integration of values across our curriculum.

The school now hopes, as a result, that these initiatives will ‘further enhance the development of values
education within our pastoral care programme and in classroom practice’. With this in mind, the school
aims to

increase our teachers’ awareness and use of programmes such as *MindMatters*, and explore how
they can be used within key learning areas, as well as within our pastoral care programme in
conjunction with the Christian teachings and ethos of the college.

A particular value of the ACER survey was, in this context, the fact that it highlighted areas of values
education that the college needs to address, thereby helping to shape the nature of the initiatives adopted
in response.
By undertaking the various programmes outlined, primarily related to MindMatters and its implementation, the school intends to

continue to improve the personal development of our students in terms of learning, relationships, attitude and behaviour, and to address some of the deficiencies highlighted by the ACER Attitudes and Values survey. It is anticipated that this will have a flow-on effect, resulting in even better communication and relationships with our parent body and with the wider community as we work together in promoting social responsibility and positive values.

Where to next?

Pedare Christian College clearly has embarked on a major programme of initiatives with MindMatters as its base. It plans to now consolidate its work over the past year, while continuing to explore programmes such as MindMatters ‘to encourage the personal development of our students’.

A particular focus in this regard will be, it explains, ‘to address the areas of lower commitment within specific dimensions revealed by the ACER survey’, as shown in the following examples.

- ‘Our students’ commitment to the value dimension “service to others” was less than that of all students in all schools … [from which] we concluded that our students are not as appreciative in terms of making personal sacrifice to assist the needs of others.’
- ‘Our students’ current attendance rate at church is below that which we had expected … [and] We concluded that there is a need to re-examine the role and relevancy of the church in our young adolescents’ lives.’
- ‘We recognised the variation among our student population regarding the value dimension “commitment to God and Jesus” ’. The drop-off in commitment from Year 7 to Years 8 and 10, with a subsequent upturn in Year 12, led the school to conclude that ‘this reflects the unfortunate perception by developing adolescents that religion has decreasing meaning in their lives’.

The school will re-administer the ACER survey in two years time to determine the impact of the changes the school has made.

If this does constitute a change of direction at all, it takes the form of a realisation that values education requires a broader approach than just relying on formal teaching of Christianity to shape young people’s views.

As the school explained:

Pedare Christian College has always considered itself to be a strong Christian environment that develops within young people positive social values.

It is true to say that we may [in this context] have made the mistake of thinking this only happened through our Christian Life lessons. Our pastoral development in the past has not been based on specific researched programmes and tended to be lacking in direction and guidance.

We need to move beyond simply delivering a Christian message, to developing adolescents by supplementing or complementing this with a well-researched, structured and resourced pastoral development programme. In our case, this is the MindMatters programme.
Lance Holt School

Head, heart and hands
Head, heart and hands at Lance Holt

Established in 1970 to provide ‘innovative education in a community’, Lance Holt School, which enrols almost 100 students from kindergarten to Year 7, has tended to focus on issues of social justice, community participation, environmental awareness and best practice teaching.

Having participated in a values review project in 1996, which included substantial consultation in the school community, the school has a clearly articulated statement of agreed values comprising the following affirmations:

- We are committed to developing a wonder of the natural world and encouraging a care of the environment which reflects a global stewardship.
- We recognise the importance of learning as a lifelong process.
- We actively pursue cooperation and the peaceful resolution of conflict.
- We encourage creativity, curiosity and the questioning mind.
- We recognise the special vulnerability of children and their need for a safe and healthy environment.
- We see the education of children encompassing their social, emotional, academic and physical development.
- We encourage self-responsibility, self-knowledge and self-reflection.
- We promote shared responsibility with regard to the relationship between self and community.
- We understand the diversity and uniqueness of the Fremantle community and respect the special relationship between ourselves and that community.
- We affirm the equal worth and basic right of all persons. In doing so we recognise individual differences and the uniqueness of the individual.

The local context

Lance Holt lies within the traditional country of the Whadjuk Nyungars and the local government area of the City of Fremantle, close to the port at the mouth of the Swan River and only five minutes walk from Bathers Beach. Nyungars have cared for the coastline around Manjaree, as the beach is known in their language, for tens of thousands of years and still recount dreaming stories from times gone past. Bathers Beach/Manjaree also has historic significance for European settlers as it is where Captain Stirling first landed and planted a British flag.

Today, there are substantial economic, social, cultural and environmental pressures on the area, which made it an appropriate subject for a significant sustainability focus by the school. On the other side of the ledger, the broader Fremantle area has significant sustainability strengths on which the school could draw, including a well-resourced and welcoming Environmental Technology Centre (ETC) at Murdoch University which was central to the project pursued.

Sustainability is, the school believes, highly compatible with its existing statement of values, and directly relates to many aspects of the Western Australian curriculum framework. The key aims of its values-based sustainability project were, in this context, to ‘bring the concepts and practices of sustainability explicitly into the curriculum at our school and into our daily practice where possible’. The Sustainable Living and Coastcare projects outlined below were seen as practical and significant ways to explore sustainability values in the school.
Developing civic and social skills

Students at Lance Holt are ‘strongly imbued from kindergarten with a sense that a set of rights comes with responsibilities’. The values education project pursued by the school provided students with the concepts and practical tools to make constructive changes in their own local area and the school environment. As the school itself explains:

This project explored how rights to use the environment, the rights to have your say, the rights to enjoy other cultures, and the rights to vital economic needs are all matched with responsibilities to care for human and non-human members of our earth community.

Students’ self-esteem and confidence are in part built by empowerment; that is, a sense that they can change the world around them.

The project promoted environmental responsibility by acknowledgement and learning of cultural heritage, by understanding the diversity of the environment and the need for protection and management, and an understanding of sustainable development.

By focusing on constructive case studies with rational and help-seeking components, students can gain a sense that the world is a resilient place and that they are resilient agents within it. They will also understand that many cultures at many times have faced sustainability challenges and that solving them is a normal part of cultural practice, even if the specifics are unique. This understanding will lead to a healthier perspective than one of blame.

Participating in the study of natural environments allows students, the school believes, to ‘care spontaneously, through a love of the natural world, rather than having someone leaning over them telling them to “care more” and “do more”’.

Beyond all this, the school has demonstrated its civic and social responsibility in practice, contributing directly to the community as a result of its sustainability work, through such activities as:

- presenting its project at the World Environment Day display in the Western Australian State Museum;
- presenting the project at a literacy conference, an inquiry-based learning conference and an interdisciplinary conference titled On the Beach;
- participation by the Years 6–7 group in a Gardening Australia show which focused on Murdoch University’s ETC and went to air in 2003; and
- contributing its project story to EQ magazine number 4 in 2003.

Fully connected projects

Values education at Lance Holt is seen as a process of ‘deeply engaging with what it means to be human in relationship with other humans and with the world around us’. This involves recognising the links between rights and responsibilities, and building links among ‘abstract values, actions within the broader community, daily practice within the school, the educative process within the school and the substantive content of our curriculum’.

The project implemented in this context assumed that ‘the nature of values education should be
appropriate to children’s age, responsive to children’s needs, not overly didactic and enjoyable’. Just as important, the project was not seen as an ‘add-on’ to complete and put aside while the real curriculum was pursued, but as ‘fully integrated into our school term and fully connected with the rest of the learning process’.

The upper school project was located at Murdoch University’s ETC where students had the opportunity to learn the basics of permaculture gardening and environmentally friendly technology, with an associated focus on democracy and social exchange. The lower school project, by contrast, was located at Bathers Beach/Manjaree to formally establish the school as a Coastcare group responsible for the monitoring and care of the beach on an ongoing basis.

In each case the projects were undertaken in a practical, outdoor context, and aimed to empower children to care for their world in ‘a constructive and guilt-free manner’, while creating lasting partnerships between the school and members of the community. In addition, staff were provided with professional development to prepare them for the projects, including a workshop on environmental ethics and one on the political history and value framework of sustainability.

The whole project was launched in November 2002 with a ceremony at Bathers Beach/Manjaree, which was preluded by a procession of students, parents and teachers carrying a representation of the school’s sea dragon mascot which the children had made. At the beach a local Nyungar elder conducted a friendship ceremony and presented the school with a handmade friendship stick. She reminded participants that they were sitting on Aboriginal land, which she was happy to be sharing with them. She then conducted a smoking ceremony to banish the bad spirits and welcome the good.

The upper school project then explored sustainability values and the environmental ethics underlying its activities in workshops with members of Murdoch University’s academic staff from the Division of Environmental Science, the Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre and the Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy. More specifically, it comprised:

- an initial environmental ethics workshop for students at the ETC which included a song and dance that students readily embraced;
- three separate two-hour visits to the centre for students to learn the principles and practice of simple, environmentally friendly gardening and technology they can use in their own lives; and
- a variety of follow-up classroom activities, including the organisation of a conference about sustainability attended by the school community and another school in the area involved in the Values Education Study.

The conference in particular required collaborative planning by the students, and involved them in a process of:

- identifying and defining the topic;
- locating resources;
- selecting and recording information;
- extending information;
- sharing information;
- taking action; and
- reflecting on and evaluating the whole experience.

It proved to be an ‘empowering learning experience’, which provided students with ‘a purpose for their learning and an opportunity to reflect on that learning’.
The lower school project involved a series of trips to Bathers Beach/Manjaree with supporting classroom activities that addressed Nyungar studies, mapping, environmental monitoring, beachcombing, life drawing, litter collection/garbology, sand sculptures of self, swimming, snorkelling and intertidal reef and rock studies, playing in a wooden adventure playground at the beach which depicts marine life and history of the area, weaving and coiling nets and baskets using found objects, and development of a large mural depicting coast care at the beach. Staff also conducted several discussions with children about sustainability values, designed to stimulate thinking about belonging and sustainability, and not just what is right and wrong.

In these ways, it capitalised on young children’s natural curiosity about their physical and social world and their strong desire to make sense of their world through active participation.

These activities were also, the school explains, opportunities for children to build on their understandings, experiences and values. The activities were, to use the school’s own words, ‘purposeful and designed to encourage engagement and responsibility. The children were encouraged to wonder, to ask questions, observe and hypothesise in order to make sense of the world around them’.

A comprehensive learning approach

In general, the school tried to focus on students’ ‘head, heart and hands’. It worked in small groups and involved community members, and tried to be ‘reflexive’ in approach so it ‘followed the children’s interests as well as leading the values project’. It closely linked classroom work to excursion activities, and documented the project with digital video and photography. The lower school children documented their findings through drawing and writing, while the upper school students kept a learning journal and became involved in photography.

Teachers’ observations, along with the data from simple surveys and assignments which, among other things, asked students to explore their understanding of sustainability in terms of their head, heart and hands, suggest that upper school children:

- were very enthusiastic and motivated by the project and looked forward to the workshops;
- were empowered by the project;
- had begun to change their attitudes towards sustainability and knew what the concept meant;
- have grasped the values underlying appropriate technology and have ‘learnt deeply’;
- see themselves as ‘pioneers in the field’; and
- learned about working and communicating in small teams.

As a result of the project students have become involved in worm farming, composting and recycling at home, and the class has entered a Western Power solar energy competition. In addition, the class decision to plan and conduct a sustainability conference at the ETC has developed students’ process and multimedia skills while generating a degree of class pride.

The school now plans to do this ETC project every second year so each child passing through the Years 6–7 class will experience the project at some point.

Analysis of student drawings, in particular, and class discussions suggest that lower school students have:

- deepened their sense of place at Bathers Beach/Manjaree;
- developed an awareness that they can care for the beach in various ways;
- strengthened their understanding of Aboriginal culture in connection to the beach;
• gained an appreciation that they share the beach with the community;
• learned more about the ecology of the beach and associated environmental health issues; and
• generally had a lot of fun.

Reflecting the success of this project in the school, the Coastcare work has now been extended to the Years 4–5 class, with a focus on monitoring beach conditions during one term.

To add to these positive outcomes, both projects generated substantial parent involvement, with the result that the school community is now considering one parent’s suggestion to partner the Fremantle Arts Centre to develop an organic garden in their grounds.

An interesting spin-off from the project in the lower years is that, following a lecture on eco-philosophy and children at Murdoch University, staff have been inspired to ‘develop a better understanding of how to interpret young children’s drawings ... as they are potentially a very rich source of conscious and unconscious information’. The school is, in its data gathering and analysis, also keen to allocate time for more detailed one-to-one interviews with students to further strengthen the anecdotal evidence it collects.

What worked

The upper school project worked, in the school’s view, because:

• it linked across the curriculum, taking in the learning areas of Science, Society and Environment, Technology and Enterprise, and Languages other than English;
• the teacher interpreted and supported the ETC activities with appropriate classroom activities (eg ongoing classroom discussions focused on alternatives to fossil fuels, water conservation and recycling and reuse); and
• of the special partnership with Murdoch University’s Environmental Technology Centre and the associated excursions, journals and fun practical work.

‘Each child had a role, and all took pride in the project. The children felt like pioneers in practical sustainability. They felt they were agents of change.’

Beyond this, the school nominated the following particular strategies as especially effective.

• Active participation – ‘Instead of using books, the students learnt how to do things with their hands and to participate in sustainable living.’ Activities included learning about Indigenous bush tucker and sustainable lifestyles, using a composting toilet (‘a big highlight’), cooking cakes and nachos in a solar oven, planting vegies and interpreting key aspects of the ETC using the signage to good effect.
• Making a difference/empowerment – ‘Activities were easily achievable in a home environment or back at school, such as developing a worm farm, composting and recycling. Children gained a sense of empowerment because they could translate these activities into their own life and make a difference. The children took responsibility and this stimulated them to be active agents in the change process towards sustainability, rather than feel overwhelmed by the problems of the world.’
• Sharing knowledge – ‘Children felt valued by learning from university lecturers and a Nyungar elder, and being treated with respect by these people. This also gave students a chance to see where their careers and lives might go. Children were then able to share their knowledge about practical sustainability at the home level, at the school level, and in the wider community through the conference.’
Children in the lower school’s Coastcare project learned best about values when, the school observed, engaged in the type of activities listed below.

- **Discovery** – beachcombing, snorkelling and looking for intertidal animals. ‘The children loved to find treasures and show them to each other and to parents/teachers … [and] this stimulated their sense of wonder for the natural world.’
- **Wondering and reflection** – ‘Wondering and reflecting freely without necessarily having to find the “correct” answer; critical reflections on values issues such as “Is it okay to bury your apple on the beach?” or “Do Norfolk Island pines belong at Bathers Beach?” stimulated keen discussion.’
- **Storytelling** – Nyungar culture traditionally is passed down through telling stories, and the children ‘responded deeply to the structure of such narratives … It was like being on the Dreaming trail for them’.
- **Representation, mapping and drawing** – ‘Children had the opportunity to make their own observations about what is important to them and to interpret their world view and aesthetic values. The children developed a sense of the coast-scape and how the parts made up the whole: the beach, the cliffs, and the adjacent mouth of the Swan Estuary.’
- **Making a difference** – ‘Children felt very strongly that by clearing litter from the beach they really were committed carers for the beach, and they felt very proud of this and satisfied with themselves.’
- **Kinaesthetic experiences** – Children wove seagrass into baskets, sculpted themselves in sand and swam in the sea, and ‘these experiences stimulated their senses and physical enjoyment of themselves in relation to the environment’.

In addition, the school observed:

Some unplanned experiences and events happened just because we were there. These created interest and learning: like finding and releasing a sea hare back into the sea, and seeing dolphins at the beach … We noted how it often was a singular experience like this that can turn people on to conservation with a lasting passion. These situations cannot necessarily be consciously constructed, but we can provide places and opportunities for children to have their own transformative experiences, and we must try to recognise and support these experiences when they occur.

**Keep things flexible**

Successful programme implementation requires substantial flexibility from any school as it is almost certain that not everything will work. This is clearly evident in the following vignette from Lance Holt’s early experience in the Values Education Study:

It took a while to get the dynamics of the Coastcare project running smoothly because there were so many people involved and there were so many variables – the weather, the kids’ interests, the level of parental involvement (re supervision of small groups and swimming). In relation to all these variables we had to keep discussing the options and being open to change. Some activities we planned, like coastal monitoring, didn’t really take off and might be better suited to older children. We had also hoped that the younger children would be able to map the route from the school to the beach, as part of developing a geographical sense of place, but in the heat it was too much to expect them to sit on the footpath drawing street signs, shops and other landmarks. However, we did this exercise in discussion as we walked … [and] This may be an activity we can follow up later in the cooler weather.
Working in large groups definitely did not work … It worked much better when we broke up into small groups and the children could select what activity they wanted to do. Some preferred to do the coiling, some snorkelling, some beachcombing and others just loved collecting litter … The teachers did an excellent job of interpreting and supporting the beach activities with age appropriate classroom activities.

Since these events occurred, the school has set in place structures to further enhance its flexibility of approach, such as meeting each day as a school to ‘discuss matters that concern everyone and share some of the things that are important to individuals’. These meetings also are designed to ‘empower students in the school to speak out’. They are chaired by students and promote ‘independence, collaboration and inclusivity’. They also, according to the school, ‘foster individual self-esteem by valuing children’s stories … [and] develop core shared values of respect and concern for others and their rights, and social and civic responsibility’.

Consolidating an existing approach

The sustainability values project was not, it must be acknowledged, ‘a radical departure from what the school has always done’, and by no means a ‘fundamental change’ to classroom or extra-classroom programmes and activities.

What it did do, however, was provide teachers with an ‘umbrella concept for thinking about and implementing a range of classroom activities’. As such, it proved ‘an excellent opportunity to greatly enrich the way we teach values education’ and to expand the horizons of the school so it now recognises the need for more explicit identification of values in our teaching and learning programmes. We can see that almost any learning area provides an opportunity to talk about values and/or sustainability. The school has a greater understanding that values underpin everything we do. The project [also] has made parents more aware of values education in the school … [and] they may have broadened their view of the all-encompassing nature of values.

Thus, the project ‘strongly affirmed’ the school’s view that values are central to education and highlighted the interconnections between sustainability and the curriculum. To use its own words in reflecting on the whole experience:

It is clear that solving real-world problems involves a learning process that needs to be underpinned with integrated cross-curriculum values education. We want our children to recognise that sustainability practices, like all practices, are not just technical endeavours. Sustainability values are fundamentally contested. Values discussions are as much, if not more, a part of sustainable development as the technical outcomes.
Alice Springs High School

Retaining young people
Retaining young people at Alice Springs High

The efforts at Alice Springs High School to build and nurture real relationships, mutual respect, tolerance, acceptance and teamwork grew directly out of the specific circumstances of the school and the students it enrols.

Alice Springs High is one of two public junior secondary high schools in the city, primarily catering for students in Years 7 to 10, with a small intake in Years 11 and 12. The school enrols approximately 430 students, almost half of whom are identified as Indigenous students representing six different language groups. Many of the students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds and single-parent families, and the school has experienced high degrees of transience of both students and staff.

The movement of students has been a particular school concern through the year, as evidenced by the fact that the school started 2003 with an enrolment of 434 and finished with 420, but saw 209 new students enrol through the year – a turnover rate of virtually 50%.

The school’s approach to values education arose from the commitment of many staff to improving relationships with parents and students, as well as improving student outcomes, coupled with the need to generally cater better for students, starting with those in Year 10.

A new structure for Year 10

Historically, by the time students at the school reach Year 10 they have lost interest in their studies and many fail to complete the year. Staff felt that if attendance and retention were to be improved then the year needed to be restructured to give students more ‘control, flexibility and choice over their course of study’, and thereby better meet their needs. This would, together with increased teaching and modelling of self-esteem, confidence, stress management, teamwork, cooperation and respect, create an environment that encourages attendance of students, full participation and success.

Prior to heading down this path, the school had tinkered around the edges to address attendance levels of less than 70%, by giving up some of the maths, English, science and social education (MESS) time for electives based on these four areas where students experienced some choice. Other values and pastoral care activities were taught ‘either spasmodically in the younger years by staff either pulling out one-off lessons from kits or spending the last half of a lesson on an issue, normally unsuccessfully’. While this achieved some success, it remained the case that many students were not achieving their potential and saw little or no value in pursuing their education. The school needed a more holistic approach.

For 2003, it was agreed that the school’s Year 10 team would bring together the whole cohort in what they called MESS Halls, which were created as large teaching areas by knocking down walls; these constituted the hub of the Year 10 programme through the year.

Students were surveyed at the end of the previous year on the subjects and electives that interested them, with the result that staff offered such courses as construction, music, guitar, girls’ health, forensic science, sport studies, hills and maps, catastrophic events, the solar car challenge, Stage 1 maths, drama, art, Easter
cooking and craft, child care, hospitality, automotive and welding. Each student was required to choose three electives as well as complete the more traditional MESS programme. The timetable was structured accordingly.

Central to the programme was the willingness of Year 10 teachers to give up their release time to be in class every lesson of the day, either teaching their electives or assisting students in the MESS Halls with their work in maths, English, science and social education. When students were not in formal classes they were in the MESS Halls. These contained 20 computers and were staffed by teacher assistants and at least two teachers who helped students with their work, undertook tuition with small withdrawal groups, and assisted students to complete assignment work.

In addition, all students attended a compulsory pastoral care session once a week, which focused on the key school values of stress management, teamwork and making positive choices. This time also provided the opportunity for students to meet with counsellors and career education advisers, and to undertake team-building activities, primarily using MindMatters resource kits.

The school used its pastoral care sessions to engage community resources for its Year 10 students. This included:

- career counsellor visits on Wednesday afternoons to speak to students about career choices and life pathways;
- a student visit to the Career Expo to assist them with subject choices and determining future options;
- twice weekly visits by a registered nurse who worked with small groups on health issues;
- visits by a dietitian to speak about healthy lifestyles;
- police visits on a range of youth issues;
- a workshop for Year 10 staff on how to incorporate loss and grief into the pastoral care programme;
- weekly gym sessions for girls to promote teamwork and fitness; and
- assistance to staff on pastoral care activities involving decision making, positive choices and stress management.

That the overall approach captured the imagination of the parent community is evident in the fact that an informal parent information night and barbecue held early in the term to explain the programme attracted more than 80% of parents in a school that has tended to struggle for parental support.

Sitting behind this whole restructure of Year 10 was also significant training and professional development of staff, including full staff in-service training on:

- the Real Justice programme, based on a restorative practices framework which provides explicit practices capable of building healthier and stronger school communities, and which has been adopted as the behaviour management policy of the school; and
- the concept and structure adopted for Year 10 so it is shared and understood beyond just the Year 10 team itself.

4 The basic tenets of Real Justice are ‘what happened, what harm has resulted and what needs to happen to make things right?’ Deterrence is linked to relationships and personal accountability and uses the approach of conferencing, where a structured meeting is held between ‘offenders’, ‘victims’ and both parties’ families and friends in which they deal with the consequences of the incident and decide how best to repair the harm. Conferencing is a straightforward problem-solving method that demonstrates how students can resolve their own problems when provided with a constructive forum in which to do so.
It ought be noted in this context that, although the new approach enjoys the total support of parents, the school council and the management of the school, not all staff initially embraced the idea because of its impact on release time. Some were concerned that proposed extensions to other year levels would impact negatively on preparation and assessment time, and hence the quality of teaching they provide; though the experience of the Year 10 team was that the benefits far outweighed the costs, making the programme worthy of extension throughout the school.

A very positive response

This whole new structure was, the school believes, ‘an outstanding success’. Students started to ‘really enjoy coming to school, attendance improved remarkably, behavioural problems almost disappeared and students started to function as a team’. In addition, staff worked more as a functioning team, which also was readily apparent to students within and beyond Year 10. Staff stress was ‘significantly reduced, relationships between the staff and students were outstanding and the values we had incorporated into the approach were being adopted’.

At a more quantitative level, the principal noted in the school’s 2003 annual report:

The establishment of a team approach to teaching, learning and school structure has had a remarkable effect … Year 10 students exemplified the effectiveness of this new approach with 96% attendance for the 2003 school year, a 30% drop in behaviour matters and 100% retention to Stage 1 (95% continuing on to senior schooling and the remainder to full-time apprenticeships). There was greatly improved attendance and resulting academic success at the Year 10 level. In past years this same group of students averaged an attendance rate below 80%. This year [2003] under the new approach to the senior years, the Year 10 average attendance increased to 96%.

Beyond this, an independent assessment of the impact that MindMatters, values education and other programmes had on the school in 2003, which also was referenced in the annual report, concluded that:

- students have a positive relationship with teachers;
- students have a more positive relationship with peers;
- there is increased confidence among students that bullying will be dealt with swiftly;
- there is a reduction in serious behavioural problems;
- there has been a reduction of incidents that require intervention from senior management; and
- students feel highly connected to Alice Springs High School.

When absenteeism does occur, staff feel that they deal with it more effectively now by adopting a Real Justice approach – ‘not blaming a student for the problem, but focusing on the problem itself and how to rectify it’.

Just as encouraging in terms of the evidence gathered, perhaps, was the fact that 98% of students surveyed in 2003 indicated that they preferred the new arrangement for Year 10, as can be seen from the following comments from their pastoral care diaries.

- ‘I am finally having a choice in subjects.’
- ‘We get so much more help this year compared to any other year.’
- ‘The teachers are more friendly.’
- ‘The stress stuff was good.’
- ‘It’s good that we can work in groups and help each other.’
• ‘We can work at our own pace.’
• ‘It’s good only having a few teachers because you get to know them better.’
• ‘We have more freedom.’

Staff were very impressed with the programme, and decided to continue and promote it as a way of improving attendance and retention while creating a learning environment that reduces bullying, teasing and harassment through a team approach and greater individual choice. The concept of a more student-centred approach has subsequently been adopted across the entire school, with the only caveat being the concern already noted about lost release time. Certainly the school principal observed increased levels of tolerance, respect and support for peers among students, and was keen for the whole school to adopt the approach to make pastoral care more meaningful and better meet student needs.

Even at a relatively early stage, the school’s expectation on the basis of its experience so far is that the whole school ethos will change and become one where ‘tolerance, respect, individuality, team building and positive self-esteem will be the underlying principles ... effectively overcoming many of the behavioural issues the school now faces’.

One issue that did have to be addressed, however, was how the student groupings were formed. In the initial trial students were given total control and, although this proved successful at first, it quickly became apparent that ‘one group was completely dysfunctional due to the personalities and was not working in a cohesive way’. Subsequent changes resulted in major improvements in group cooperation and teamwork, and also served to remind the school that giving students freedom does not mean abdicating adult responsibility for the shape and effectiveness of the educational programme they receive.

When looked at overall, the school feels it ‘difficult to identify what parts of the programme were most successful in terms of students’ attendance and outcomes’. Rather, they believe it a combination of the lot; though they did observe:

When the pastoral care sessions were cancelled due to assemblies or public holidays, students were disappointed. They loved the chance to participate in the team-building activities such as dressing up in ‘protective layers’ of newspaper and so on. Furthermore, many of the stress management classes were repeated due to student demand, with many of our ‘more difficult boys’ lying down and falling asleep listening to calming stories and relaxing music.

### Extending the approach

With such positive outcomes to the Year 10 trial, it is hardly surprising that the school saw little option but to maintain and extend the approach. ‘It was’, they explained, ‘impossible to abandon this approach and staff agreed to totally adopt it.’ It has, as a result, been incorporated in the school’s Action Plan for School Improvement, which sets out how the school will cater better for its students and provide more appropriate teaching and learning opportunities for each and every student it enrols.

Over the 2003 Christmas holidays, $100,000 was spent removing walls and creating huge team-teaching areas that have enabled the school to structure itself around four teaching and learning teams. The school outlines these in the following terms.
• **Year 7 – Foundations … A sound start to quality secondary education**

This programme provides a sound beginning for Year 7 students experiencing their first year of secondary schooling. The approach involves an emphasis on pastoral care activities, team building and literacy and numeracy.

• **Years 8–9 – Middle School … Education just in time, not just in case**

Pedagogy is based on productive relationships developed throughout the foundation years of student learning. These are developed to cater for all students’ interests and abilities to help students continue to learn while undergoing many physical and emotional changes.

• **Year 10 – Senior School … Providing pathways to a great future**

The last year of junior secondary schooling. The senior year students and staff come together as a team to foster individuality and teamwork, focusing on preparation and life choices. Students and staff take a team approach to learning and continue to build on past experiences.

• **Years 11–12 – Future Directions … Blending academic success with vocational readiness**

This programme offers senior secondary and vocational education and training programmes to students.

### The pedagogical flow-on

Given the emphasis on teamwork and values it is hardly surprising that the school’s approach to classroom practice has ‘changed considerably’.

‘Staff’, the school explains, ‘value not only content or subject knowledge, but also the whole student regardless of ability.’ Many students in the school have cultural responsibilities and commitments, resulting in students attending late, having to leave early and participating in cultural ceremonies which may take many weeks. The whole approach has shifted and students are valued when they attend, receiving as much support and assistance as possible. Furthermore, with the incorporation of values such as tolerance, acceptance and respect, students and staff have developed greater relationships … All staff are now required to work as a team, sharing resources and ideas, and all the Year 10 staff are now responsible for all students and all their subjects, not just the teacher with the subject expertise. Preparation and planning is all collaborative and staff work as a team to develop programmes and lessons designed specifically for the individual student.

With its focus on more student control, flexibility and choice of courses to better suit individual needs, the Year 10 structure piloted by the school incorporates, teaches and models values in all programmes including ‘self-esteem, confidence, compassion, stress management, mateship, teamwork, cooperation and respect’, to provide an environment where attendance, participation and success are encouraged and students want to come to school.

That said, the school is clear in its view that one-off lessons on values do not work:

Students are not interested and the value of them is minimal.
Values need to be incorporated into everything we do, and not seen as a separate part of the curriculum. The way a classroom is designed, the way staff work as a team, the flexible approach, the catering for all needs, the valuing of individual differences, and choice all impact on a student’s values.

If a student attends school more often, if teachers respect that student, if the programme is designed for individual differences, students then develop their own value set. All students have different values and teachers should foster the positive ones rather than try to teach them to students.

Self-esteem, respect, valuing others, teamwork, difference are all values we like to foster in students and these need to be totally incorporated into the school routine, not a separate part of the school day.

Bringing parents on board

As already indicated, Alice Springs High School has not generally been successful in promoting parental involvement in its programmes and activities. Traditional parent–teacher nights have been poorly attended and parents often have refused to visit the school to discuss their child’s performance or, in many cases, lack of it.

Staff decided in this context that, as part of the new Year 10 programme, they would hold informal meetings with parents once a term, involving a barbecue either at school or in local parks. These have been ‘hugely successful’ with over 80% of parents and extended families attending and sharing in food. The school also has been very active in public promotion of the programme to the wider community, featuring on radio shows and in the local newspaper explaining the approach.

Perhaps in part as a response to all this effort to involve and engage the parent community, feedback on the programme has been very positive indeed. While only relatively few parents attended a formal forum on the programme in 2003, they all were highly supportive of it. The school went further, however, and contacted an additional 25% of parents by telephone to ask about their perceptions of the new structure and the values education approach. ‘All’, it is reported, ‘were positive about the year so far and stated that their child was happy with the set-up.’ Several parents also were keen to discuss further how the new set-up developed and what is likely to happen in the future.

A very positive, but by no means atypical, response came from one parent whose son had recently transferred to the school. This mother explained that in the previous year, when her son was in Year 9, ‘it was a struggle to get him to go to school and his reports were disappointing’. By contrast, she observed that he ‘now loves school and she encourages him to stay in bed until a reasonable hour in the mornings as he is so happy and excited about going to school’. This is something she put down to ‘him being given relative freedom about subject choices and the new team set-up’.

This sort of comment was echoed by another parent, who attended the school’s community forum and effusively stated that ‘in his wildest dreams he never imagined that [his son] loves school so much for the first time’; to which the principal responded by pointing out ‘we are leading the Territory with the set-up and he is happy to promote it through regional and Territory principal conferences’.

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In a further parent survey conducted at the end of 2003 as part of the school’s *Real Justice* initiative, parents indicated that they felt Alice Springs High is ‘a fair and compassionate school’, and 90% of randomly selected parents interviewed felt that ‘their child has always been fairly dealt with and parents involved in a positive and productive way’.

All of this is important, not just because parental support is critical to programme success, but also because the school has long tried to improve community perceptions about it to little avail. ‘This has been a very uphill battle, with many people still commenting on things that occurred up to 20 years ago.’ The enthusiastic response of parents to the restructured programme in Year 10 has, however, helped to change this around. The new principal is, with the full backing of staff, determined to improve the image of the school. The Year 10 success has, in this context, been a major ‘selling point’ of the school. Several newspaper articles have been written about it, both in Alice Springs and Darwin. Also, many schools in the Territory have visited and sent staff to observe the programme to see how we have managed to improve attendance and student achievement so quickly by adopting this new approach.

Word of mouth is also huge in Alice Springs and town-based career education advisors and counsellors are now promoting the Year 10 programme as a preferred choice for many young people in the town, particularly those disengaged or not interested in school.

This has continued and the Year 10 programme this year currently has over 100 students, 15 from other secondary schools in Alice Springs. At a recent ‘Meet the Teacher’ night, over 80 parents attended and fully supported this approach.

**Building on success**

An important feature of the programme throughout, including its extension beyond Year 10 in 2004, has been the expectation that staff, students and parents continually evaluate the approach in terms of ‘outcomes achieved and also the value to the school’. This has enabled staff to alter the programme as needed along the way, and thereby further strengthen its effect.

That said, staff at the school have indicated that they always are trying to implement new ideas to better cater for their students and ensure that they are achieving to their full potential.

The continuing challenge they perceive is to build on their considerable success to date, and the fact that the ‘incorporation of values into the entire school philosophy and curriculum has been such an enormous success’.

In the inspiring words of the school itself as it lays out its future plans, its efforts will continue to be refined and improved to make ASHS the secondary school of choice in Alice Springs.

Until this is achieved management, staff and students will continue to build on the strong connections being developed as a result of the innovative programmes being adopted across the school as a result of this trial.
Albany Primary School

A Tribes community
A Tribes community at Albany Primary

Having witnessed ‘a disturbing lack of tolerance on the part of our students’ over some years, Albany Primary School, on the south coast of Western Australia, wanted its students to realise that all people deserve respect.

Demographic change over the last five to ten years has meant that this traditionally European, semi-professional or professional background school of more than 500 has enrolled many more children with ‘working class’ or non-working parents, more Aboriginal students, and more children who represent a greater diversity of cultures. New children, the school has noted, were not always readily included, with some even being overtly excluded because they were seen as not fitting in.

Thus, the school investigated and progressively implemented the Tribes TLC® (Teaching and Learning Community) approach which ‘methodically teaches a school how to engage teachers, administrators, students and families to work together as a learning community dedicated to caring and support, active participation and positive expectations for all young people in the circle of concern’. This is designed to achieve the Tribes mission ‘to assure the healthy development of every child so that each has the knowledge, skills and resiliency to be successful in a rapidly changing world’.

Tribes is a process based on ‘current studies in cooperative learning, human development, brain compatible learning, multiple intelligences, resiliency, classroom management theories, group learning and constructivist strategies’. The attraction the programme has for Albany Primary is the fact that it challenges teachers to focus not so much on the question of ‘how do I fit this into the curriculum?’ but, rather, the more important issue of ‘which of the many strategies I have been exposed to through my Tribes training can best be used for this topic/subject/lesson?’

Five core agreements

Tribes centres on five core agreements and the development of a common language around these and their implementation in the school: Mutual Respect, Attentive Listening, Right to Pass, Expressing Appreciations – No Put Downs, and Personal Best. The adoption of the language is reinforced through all school communications and is even being used to describe students’ personal and social development in the course of school reporting to parents on their children’s performance through the year.

Tribes classrooms are, the school explains, ‘student-centred, use cooperative learning methods, use multiple learning styles, use interactive learning experiences and actively promote the creation and sustaining of a positive learning environment’. Issues of morality, ethics and social justice are regularly addressed as part of the daily dialogue within each classroom, ‘enacted on the small stage of the safe learning community and extrapolated to cover issues within the broader community’.

5 Tribes TLC® is part of the broader Tribes approach developed by Jeanne Gibbs in the late 1970s when concerned educators in Contra Costa County in California were seeking ways to prevent substance use and abuse and other behavioural problems, to demonstrate improvement in academic test scores, and to stem the tide of teachers leaving the profession. It has progressed from an initial focus on substance abuse prevention to the whole school model of cooperative learning, social development and group process outlined in this report on values education at Albany Primary School in Western Australia.
Key twenty-first century skills the programme seeks to develop, in summary form, include:

- basic skills – reads, writes, performs arithmetic and mathematical operations, listens and speaks well;
- thinking skills – thinks critically, makes decisions, solves problems, visualises, knows how to learn and reason; and
- personal qualities – displays responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, integrity and honesty.

In this context, a Tribes learning community focuses on building relationships and student connectedness to school, building trust and inclusion to limit feelings of vulnerability and defensiveness and thereby improve student behaviour, and students taking responsibility for their own learning and being held accountable for their actions. Together, this contributes to a safer learning environment, where students can become more resilient by themselves.

The actual process adopted involves:

- use of the five caring agreements;
- student membership of small groups (tribes) to support learning and positive social behaviour;
- adoption by teachers of cooperative learning methods for academics with a transfer of responsibility to students to help each other;
- all members taking responsibility for each other and for group accountability;
- taking time to reflect on tribe members’ work, special qualities and skills after every group task;
- acknowledgement of equal participation, fairness, and open and honest communication;
- mediation of group issues and conflict within the peer group; and
- teacher observations, instruction and modelling to support cooperation within the tribes.

The day in most classrooms starts with a Community Circle, where class members are able to share their ‘cares, concerns and celebrations’ before getting down to work. This gives everyone ‘a chance to work out who is likely to be a bit fragile or a bit over-exuberant and why’. This in turn helps teachers adopt strategies for individual students, and the class as a whole, that enable the focus to remain on student learning and growth, rather than seeking to manage negative behaviours throughout the day.

The success of the model lies, according to schools that have used it to good effect, in the daily practice it gives for such important individual and team building skills as:

- listening attentively;
- valuing diversity of cultures;
- expressing appreciation;
- resolving conflict;
- solving problems creatively;
- assessing improvement;
- working collaboratively on tasks;
- thinking constructively;
- making responsible decisions;
- celebrating achievement;
- reflecting on learning experiences/ideas; and
- participating fully.
Becoming a Tribes school

By the end of the Values Education Study, Albany Primary was a Tribes TLC®, though with teachers at different stages along the way and a continuing need to support staff who were only starting out.

This followed an 18-month process where:

- a core group of staff trialled parts of the process;
- the school engaged a consultant to assist with the theoretical background to the process and implementation of some strategies; and
- a School Parliament was established to discuss issues raised in class Community Circles, which are used on a daily basis as part of the Tribes process to open up dialogue in the classroom and allow every student an opportunity to be heard.

While the school’s original intention was that all staff receive the four-day training in Tribes, budget constraints initially limited this to 14 teachers, with the rest participating in a one-day ‘starter’ course, to be supplemented in time by the rest of the training and regular peer coaching. A parent representative also attended the four-day programme, and another parent and office staff were involved in the shorter in-service training that occurred.

With this level of involvement, it is hardly surprising that the school has observed that the ‘language of the agreements is rapidly becoming common throughout the school with students, parents and staff using it’. The process has, they note, ‘been an empowering one and there have been a number of anecdotes related in the staff room which indicate that there have already been some major changes in the ways students are treating each other’. This reflects the fact that the Tribes process is ‘innate in everything we do … [and] not a “tack-on” project which would get dropped off when people get busy’. There is, however, some small-scale resistance to the use of the word ‘tribes’ itself to describe student groupings, because of a perception it is ‘too American’.

Subsequent to the training funded through the Values Education Study, the school’s implementation of Tribes has gained the support of the district director, who now is promoting its adoption at a district level. The school itself has made a further financial commitment to the programme. This, together with funding from the Director of Education in Western Australia, allowed four staff to attend further training in Melbourne in the 2003 October school holidays.

Albany Primary is now a licensed training provider for the Tribes programme and is about to start training 57 staff from a number of other district schools, with further requests already received to train schools in other districts as well.

Gathering evidence of success

The school has commenced surveying students and staff, and will extend its survey to parents, to generate baseline data against which progress can be measured after further implementation of the programme. But even at this early stage, the school has observed ‘a positive shift in the relationships within classes and the playground’ and a 30% reduction in behavioural referrals to the deputy principal with no student exclusions. While this cannot necessarily be entirely attributed to Tribes, and there is no way of knowing yet if it will be sustained, it does provide some evidence of success for the school’s values-based approach.
'Research clearly shows', the school argues, ‘that the brain is most receptive to learning when the environment is safe. Early work in the Tribes classroom focuses, therefore, on developing a safe environment where children are prepared to take risks. Inclusion activities are adapted to a range of academic tasks and followed with reflection questions (another key component to successful learning). These questions prompt reflection in the areas of content/thinking, social and personal and are followed by an invitation for statements of appreciation’.

Anecdotal evidence collected by the school suggests that ‘many children who had struggled for acceptance, and who often had difficulties academically, are now achieving far better results. They are generally more skilled socially and much happier in their environment’. As a result the school administration is, as mentioned above, handling fewer referrals for inappropriate behaviour, both in class and in the playground, and children are better equipped to deal with conflict and more open in discussions of issues that arise. It also is ‘obvious’ to the school that new students ‘are made more welcome than was the case in the past’, an issue that was the initial trigger for adopting the Tribes process in the first place.

That said, Albany Primary, like most case study schools, recognises the need to gather ‘realistic and valid’ data over time, particularly related to student learning outcomes as well as behaviour at school. In the meantime, the school expects to gain much useful information from a regular teacher survey, which asks the following questions.

• How long have you been using Tribes in your class?
• To what extent do you think that the Tribes agreements assist in the teaching of values?
• How have you approached values education in the past?
• Since using Tribes have you noticed any changes in the ways your students relate to each other and to you?
• Have you talked to parents about Tribes and if yes when?
• Do you have any other comments/anecdotes regarding the Tribes process?

The survey has has yielded, among others, the following teacher comments and observations.

• ‘The children get very excited when it’s time to get into their tribes and they love the activities.’
• ‘It’s been the single most influential process that has made a difference to my teaching and classroom management … I think it will take two to three years before we see the lasting effects, changes in behaviour, etc. But we’re all committed to the philosophy, so I am keen to proceed and try more strategies.’
• ‘Children have come a long way in a short time … Tribes has given a “softer” focus to the class; children have relaxed in each other’s company … I can see their individuality surfacing and the masks come off as they become more confident.’

The last teacher quoted also related the following positive experience of using the ‘Funeral for put downs’ strategy from the Tribes book (available through the programme website at http://www.tribes.com):

The children had to write down a ‘put down’ that they had received. They then discussed the put downs. One boy said how he hated being told he smelt. The boy who had said this (and who is one of the more difficult children in the school) then apologised quite unprompted.

The ‘put downs’ were then burnt in the rubbish bin.
Enlisting broad support

Certainly one area in which the school has experienced demonstrable success is promoting the programme to its parent body in innovative ways. Parents have, it is reported, been very supportive of the process and ‘we have received many reports of the language of Tribes being used at home’. Children talk of being respectful and are now more inclined to express their appreciation of things their parents do for them. On the other side of the ledger, parents have asked for copies of the agreements to put up at home, and formal parents and citizens meetings have a regular Tribes report.

Given that it always is difficult to attract large numbers of parents to meetings, the school decided to take advantage of the high attendance that always occurs at the first assembly of the year where the student council presented a series of role-plays to introduce the concept of Tribes. This was followed up by many classes in the school with their own lists of key indicators of the Tribes agreements. One example is the Year 5 class, which rather impressively described how each of the agreements (other than personal best, which they still were working on) looked, sounded and felt in the following terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Looks like</th>
<th>Sounds like</th>
<th>Feels like</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mutual Respect</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A community working together</td>
<td>• Lots of laughter</td>
<td>• Everybody feels welcome in the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A good class of kids</td>
<td>• Quiet voices</td>
<td>• People feel happy to come to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People smiling</td>
<td>• Calm, steady conversations</td>
<td>• Everyone feels good inside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Everyone being friendly</td>
<td>• Polite manners</td>
<td>• Everyone feels included in activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People can say, ‘I don’t agree, but that’s okay’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appreciations (pick ups; no put downs)</strong></td>
<td>• Nice things are being said: good idea, well done, you’re good at that, that’s great</td>
<td>• Everyone is happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students are well behaved</td>
<td>• People are using good manners</td>
<td>• People are helping each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People are getting along together</td>
<td>• Positive comments</td>
<td>• Everyone can share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People look happy</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Everyone is valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• We are all important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Attentive Listening

- Looking at the person
- Nodding your head in agreement
- Look the person in the eyes
- Your body should be facing the speaker
- You should have your head closer to the person
- Only one person speaks at a time

- Quiet talking
- Positive words are being used like: I agree; mmmm, interesting; thank you for sharing that; I like the way you’re listening
- Only one person speaks at a time

- You feel like people are paying attention to you
- You feel happier
- You feel like you are getting the job done
- You feel more relaxed because no-one is interrupting you
- You feel like you are learning and sharing ideas

### Right to Pass

- Everyone is joining in
- People have a right to pass
- No-one is left out on purpose

- Every person has a voice

- Nobody feels pressured
- People feel a part of the classroom community
- People want to come to school

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One of the most effective times the school found to disseminate information to parents is when they gather outside classrooms waiting to pick up their children after school. Having two parents trained in *Tribes*, and having staff available at this time, has meant that a lot of parents have been reached about the programme and its implementation in the school. The clear lesson, however, is that parental involvement is, according to the school, ‘best gained through classroom interaction and informally, not at forums which take them away from their families at night’.

## An experience which can be generalised

The positive experiences outlined are, the school believes, not unique to Albany and the way it implemented *Tribes*.

While researching the *Tribes* programme and its applicability to the school, contact was made with Point Lonsdale Primary in Victoria, the first *Tribes* school in Australia. The description provided by that school at the time has, staff at Albany subsequently found, been an accurate reflection of their own experience, suggesting that *Tribes* is readily generalisable across their own district and beyond:

> Initially our work focused on change processes relating to relationships, connectedness, conflict resolution and student engagement through inclusion. These elements are now innate in the school’s culture and the focus has moved to curriculum development.

> Staff work collaboratively and there is a shared sense of ownership of school programmes as a whole. They are supportive of each other and have established positive mentoring relationships.
The learning of academic material and self-responsible behaviour is assured because teachers utilise methods based on brain-compatible learning, multiple intelligences, cooperative learning and social development research when planning for learning. The ‘thinking curriculum’ drives the planning agenda.

Teachers are designers of curriculum, risk-takers willing to step outside the boundaries and do things differently, knowing that we are working together to improve student outcomes.

Our students enjoy diverse learning opportunities and are empowered to try new strategies. Their interpersonal skills are greatly enhanced and they know they are valued members of the whole school community. They raise issues, use initiative, share ideas and willingly take risks in their learning.

*Tribes* is a multi-layered process and we work at it all the time.

In terms of actual outcomes for students, the experience of both Point Lonsdale and Albany Primary Schools is that student achievement improved following the implementation of *Tribes* because the students:

- feel more included and appreciated by their peers and teachers;
- are respected for their different abilities, cultures, gender, interests and dreams;
- are actively involved in their own learning; and
- have positive expectations from others that they will succeed.

All these factors are important for the development of self-esteem and self-confidence, which underpin successful performance in the classroom on a daily basis.

All of this experience has only reinforced the school’s approach to values education, which emphasises the creation of a safe and welcoming learning environment and the importance of explicitly teaching values such as tolerance and respect; since ‘children do not necessarily come to school having learnt such values’. That said, it is apparent to the school that successful teaching of values has to be embedded in ‘everything we do in the school community’. Stand-alone values programmes have, they argue, been tried in neighbouring schools and they tend to be ‘flavour of the month’ for a while; they are not sustained and just ‘run out of steam’.

The school’s strong advice is, in this context, that success depends on the ‘strong commitment’ of staff and the school administration, along with support from the school council and regular feedback to the community at large. And once teachers actually receive the training the process virtually ‘sells itself’. This was readily evident in the case of one or two participants who initially were ‘very sceptical’ about the *Tribes* process and begrudged giving up four days of their time. After the training, however, one of the ‘sceptics’ memorably observed that ‘this will save my teaching’; which the school interpreted as meaning ‘he had become jaded and could see that *Tribes* would be the vehicle to revitalise his teaching’.

Beyond this, the adoption of the process across the school as a whole has resulted in ‘a noticeable increase in the amount of collaboration among staff’, which tends to make it more sustainable over time. There also has been increased interest in the use of curriculum development based on multiple intelligences, Bloom’s taxonomy (as revised by Michael Pohl) and the teaching of thinking skills throughout the school – and the school currently is considering the adoption of a scope and sequence for K–7 teaching of thinking skills.
Sustainability of the approach is only enhanced by continual reinforcement of the key agreements at assemblies, in class, in the playground, at parent–teacher and other meetings, and by featuring the agreements in the school newsletter and using the common language throughout the school.

The school is also continually on the lookout for new research and programmes to adopt that will support and strengthen its Tribes approach, as it strives to inject values into all that it does.