



## Values Education In Australian Schools

### Introduction:

An unknown author wrote:

An educational system isn't worth a great deal if it teaches young people how to make a living but doesn't teach them how to make a life.

In his letter (see Appendix One) that accompanied the *National Framework For Values Education In Australian Schools*, the then Minister of Education, Science and Training, the Hon Brendan Nelson, acknowledged that:

The Australian Government, along with the State and Territory Governments, believes that education is as much about building character as it is about transferring skills, knowledge and the thirst for learning. All Australian children should receive education for active and worthwhile participation in society.”

### Background:

While *The Values Education Study* undertaken in Australia in 2003 reported that “values education across the board in Australian schools was still at an early stage” (Nelson, 2005, p1), a considerable amount has been achieved in the intervening years.

A number of common values emerged from the school communities that took part in *The Values Education Study* and these were used as the base for a draft Framework that was written and widely circulated for discussion. In due course, the *National Framework For Values Education In Australian Schools* (2005) was finalised and distributed to all Australian schools.

From the National Framework:

“Nine Values for Australian Schooling ... reflect shared values ... These shared values such as respect and ‘fair go’ are part of Australia’s common democratic way of life, which includes equality, freedom and the rule of law. They reflect our commitment to a multicultural and environmentally sustainable society where all are entitled to justice.”

(*National Framework For Values Education In Australian Schools* 2005, p 4)

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Values to be modelled and taught include:

- Care and Compassion
- Doing Your Best
- Fair Go
- Freedom
- Honesty and Trustworthiness
- Integrity
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion

Simultaneously, the State Government set aside \$29.7 million “for a number of education initiatives to be implemented over the next four years through the Values Education Programme.” (Nelson, 2005, p1). The Values Education Good Practice Projects One and Two were duly established with the aim of working towards the National Framework’s vision for all Australian schools to provide values education in a “planned and systematic way” as a core aspect of their schooling. Conducted during 2005 to 2006, Stage One involved 166 schools in 26 cluster groups. Continuing from 2006 through to 2008, Stage Two of the project comprised 143 schools in 25 cluster groups. (It should be noted that in order to enable observation of the impacts of values education over a longer term, a number of Stage 1 clusters were selected to extend their work into Stage 2.)

## Effective Values Education:

The *National Framework For Values Education In Australian Schools*, acknowledges that effective values education:

1. helps students understand and be able to apply [the expressed] values
2. is an explicit goal of schooling that promotes Australia’s democratic way of life and values the diversity in Australian schools
3. articulates the values of the school community and applies these consistently in the practices of the school;
4. occurs in partnership with students, staff, families and the school community as part of a whole-school approach to education students, enabling them to exercise responsibility and strengthening their resilience
5. is presented in a safe and supportive learning environment in which students are encouraged to explore their own, their school’s and their communities’ values;
6. is delivered by trained and resourced teachers able to use a variety of different models, modes and strategies includes the provision of curriculum that meets the individual needs of students; and
7. regularly reviews the approaches used to check that they are meeting the intended outcomes

In so doing, the *National Framework* gives schools the flexibility to actively involve students in what they learn, how it is taught, and how the learning is assessed. It invites schools to design relevant learning programmes in consultation with the parent community, which will be meaningful and engaging to all students.

## Defining Values:

The *National Framework For Values Education In Australian Schools* (2005) offers two definitions of ‘values’.

“the principles and fundamental conviction which act as general guides to behaviour, the standards by which particular actions are judged as good or desirable”

(Halstead, J. and Taylor, J. & M., 2000)

And

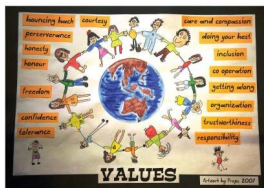
“the ideals that give significance to our lives, that are reflected through the priorities we choose, and that we act on consistently and repeatedly.” (Hill, B., 2004)

The *National Framework* also provides the following definition of ‘values education’:

“Any explicit and/or implicit school based activity that promotes student knowledge and understanding of values, and which develops the skills and dispositions of students so they enact particular values as individuals and as members of the wider community.”



At the Heart of What We Do  
Values Education at the Centre of Schooling



The Final Report of the  
Values Education Good Practice Schools Project – Stage 2  
August 2008

*At the Heart of What We Do: Values Education at the Centre of Schooling – The Final Report of the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project – Stage 2*, was released in August 2008 and is available for downloading at

<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/values/>

This document summarises ten good practices in values education identified during the second stage of the VEGPS Project. The ten good practices identified are:

- Establish and consistently use a common and shared values language across the school.
- Use pedagogies that are values-focused and student-centred within all curriculum.
- Develop values education as an integrated curriculum concept, rather than as a program, an event or an addition to curriculum.
- Explicitly teach values so students know what the values mean and how the values are lived.
- Implicitly model values and explicitly foster the modelling of values.
- Develop relevant and engaging values approaches connected to local and global contexts and which offer real opportunity for student agency.
- Use values education to consciously foster intercultural understanding, social cohesion and social inclusion.
- Provide teachers with informed, sustained and targeted professional learning and foster their professional collaborations
- Encourage teachers to take risks in their approaches to values education.
- Gather and monitor data for continuous improvement in values education.

Work in Values education is ongoing in Australia. In October 2008 the Australian Government invited all schools to apply for funding to participate in the Values in Action

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Schools Project (VASP). Working in clusters to “design, implement and evaluate the outcomes of high quality values education projects”, successful schools commenced their work in December 2008. (Homepage <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/values/>)

## References:

**At the Heart of What We Do:** Values Education at the Centre of Schooling – The Final Report of the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project – Stage 2 (August 2008) Curriculum Corporation: Victoria ISBN: 978 1 74200 079 4

**Freire, P.** (1993) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum

**Halstead, J.** and Taylor, J. & M., (2000) Learning And Teaching About Values: A review of recent research. *Cambridge Journal of Education*. Vol. 30, No. 2, pp 169-202

**Hill, Brian.** (April 2004) Keynote address, first National Forum on Values Education, Melbourne. <http://www.curriculum.edu.au>

**National** Framework For Values Education In Australian Schools (2005) Commonwealth of Australia. ISBN 0 642 77496

**Nelson, Brendan** (The Hon) (2005) Letter that accompanied the distribution of the *National Framework For Values Education In Australian Schools*. See Appendix One

## Appendix One:



MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING  
THE HON DR BRENDAN NELSON MP

Dear School Principal

I am writing in relation to the Australian Government's new Values Education Programme. The Australian Government, along with the State and Territory Governments, believes that education is as much about building character as it is about transferring skills, knowledge and the thirst for learning. All Australian children should receive education for active and worthwhile participation in society. An understanding of values as part of their schooling will assist children in their personal and civic development.

I enclose a copy of the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* and the *Values for Australian Schooling* poster drawn from the Framework. The Framework evolved from the Values Education Study. The Values Education Study showed that, while many government and non-government schools were working well in the area of values education, comprehensive values education across the board in Australian schools was still at an early stage. Details of the Values Education Study are available at <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/values/>.

A draft of the Framework was circulated to you for feedback during 2004. I would like to thank all of you who participated in this consultation and trust that this final version will meet the needs of your school.

The nine *Values for Australian Schooling* have emerged from Australian school communities and from the *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*. They reflect shared values that support our democratic way of life. Accordingly, I am asking that the *Values for Australian Schooling* poster be displayed prominently in every school as a requirement under the Schools Assistance Act 2004. All States and Territories were advised of this requirement by my Department in December 2004. All States and Territories have endorsed the National Framework.

The Australian Government is providing \$29.7 million for a number of values education initiatives to be implemented over the next four years through the Values Education Programme. These include values forums in every school, clusters of schools implementing good practice approaches, the development of a values education website and curriculum resources for all schools and national activities, including an annual national forum and projects with parents, principals, teachers and teacher educators.

I invite your school to apply to participate in Stage 1 of the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project for the first two years of the Values Education Programme. Funding will be provided for up to twenty-five clusters of schools. The model for this project is based on the Boys Education Lighthouse Schools with schools implementing good practice in values education using a cluster model. Schools are invited to make applications by 30 March 2005. Curriculum Corporation is managing this project and application details for this project are at Attachment A.

Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600. Tel: (02) 6277 7460 Fax (02) 6273 4116

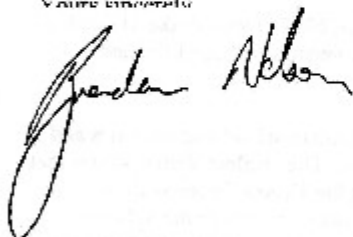
State and Territory education authorities are coordinating the conduct of a values education forum in every Australian school. *Guidelines for the Conduct of Values Education Forums in Schools 2005-2008* are at Attachment B. This lists State and Territory contacts who can assist you in organising a forum for your school.

Curriculum resources and a website for the Values Education Programme are being developed. Curriculum resources on developing values education in primary and secondary schools and a resource on conducting school values education forums will be distributed to all schools in mid 2005. The values education website will host important information for schools and provide links to the latest values education research.

I also enclose a poster from the National Safe School Framework (NSSF) and I am asking that it too be displayed prominently in the school. A copy of the NSSF was sent to all schools in March 2004. The NSSF was endorsed by all States and Territories in July 2003. It provides a set of agreed guiding principles for schools to follow so that every school can have in place protocols for providing a safe school environment and handling incidents involving bullying, violence or any form of child abuse. The Schools Assistance Act 2004 requires a commitment by education authorities to put the NSSF into effect before January 2006 and to display the poster. The poster will provide a clear indication to the school community that the school is promoting and providing a supportive learning environment in which all students and staff can feel safe.

I trust that you will find the enclosed material helpful in supporting values education and safe school practices in your school.

Yours sincerely



Encl.