

Co-curricular activity

Integrating values education into the Middle Years curriculum: BEACHVALE cluster

This activity was designed to develop and implement values in student social skills by integrating values education into Key Learning Areas for the Middle Years of Schooling.

Year levels

Middle Childhood – Early Adolescence (10–14 years)

Explicit values focus

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

Key learning areas

The immediate focus of the project was the development of social skills through the literacy program and Studies of Society and Environment as students identified the values in their physical, cultural and social environments. However, during the course of the project, it became evident that the strategies underpinning the Inquiry Learning approach developing in the cluster schools provided opportunities for values education to be integrated into all KLAs as students engaged in discovery, research, interaction with peers and the community and developing their voice in the learning process.

Cluster profile

The Brighton cluster (BEACHVALE – Brighton Environmental Action Community Helpers Values Education cluster) consists of seven reasonably large schools in the Southern Metropolitan Region of Victoria. The district has a relatively stable population with little unemployment and the majority of the community is in the higher socioeconomic group with few ESL students.

- Brighton Secondary College (1000+ students: 400 in Year 7 and 8)
- Brighton Primary School (700+ students: 200 in Year 5 and 6)
- Brighton Beach Primary School (460+ students: 150 in Year 5 and 6)
- Gardenvale Primary School (570+ students: 180 in Year 5 and 6)
- Bentleigh West Primary School (400+ students: 120 in Year 5 and 6)
- Elsternwick Primary School (450+ students: 120 in Year 5 and 6)
- Berendale Special School (130 students: Year 7–12)

Reason for co-curricular activity

The cluster schools have been working together for the past three years to build an effective learning community and a safe school environment that will strengthen students' self-esteem, optimism and commitment to personal

fulfilment. By working between and across schools, it is expected that students will gain respect for each other, take responsibility for their actions, and contribute to society and to civic life by taking care of the physical, cultural and ethical environment in which we live.

Our involvement in the Values Education Good Practice Schools Stage 1 (VEGPS1) project was an opportunity to develop an understanding of a common set of values for Middle Years students through our existing Brighton Environment Action Community Helpers (BEACH) program. This would facilitate interaction between the students at cluster schools, and between students and teachers, and teachers and teachers across the cluster, and ease the transition to secondary school.

Implementation and development

Young Leaders Group

A Young Leaders Group was formed with representation from each of the cluster schools. The group consisted of the student-elected School Captains and Vice Captains from each of the primary schools and the SRC Leaders from three primary schools and Year 7 and 8 at the secondary school. These students met twice a term, during school time, at Brighton Secondary College (BSC) and, with the cluster educator, discussed values programs already in place in their schools, identifying common values and making suggestions for implementation of the program in schools. Guests, including the local Member of Parliament, the BSC college chaplain and the BSC School Captains, were invited to attend some of the meetings to add their perspective to the discussions.

Classroom activities

Teachers across the cluster have used a variety of Thinking Tools (such as those on the Tasmanian Education Department's website, <http://www.itag.education.tas.gov.au/effectteach/Thinking/thinktools.htm> or Victoria's Department of Education, <http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/support/teaching.html>) to engage students in the interpretation of the values in the National Framework.

- Students developed mind maps, used bundling strategies, participated in paired interviews and silent galleries (where students silently move around the room to look at the ideas, suggestions, opinions of other groups of students displayed on a wall), played 'Pass the Ball' and 'Pick-up Sticks', developed graffiti boards, held brainstorming sessions and were involved in a wide range of other activities to clarify the understanding of each value.
- The *Snapshots* series from Pearson Education, a literary resource that features cultural encounters across our world was used in the classroom to generate discussion and to encourage students to think more widely about each value.
- Class surveys have identified the 'most important' values for each student and the common values identified by each class group.
- Students surveyed parents for their 'most important' values and compared the results with students' views.
- Small group discussions focused on the meaning of each of the national values and the behaviours that may demonstrate this value.

Surveys

- Students, teachers and parents across some of the schools were surveyed to identify common values. The results provided an interesting variation between the top five for the groups with all agreeing 'respect', 'honesty' and 'friendship' were key values.
- Common values in the cluster schools were identified by the Young Leaders. The most common values reflected in all schools were teamwork, respect, kindness, encouragement and responsibility.
- A table outlining the Values Program in each of the cluster schools was developed and compared with the National Framework. In most cases, all the values from the national framework were already identified in the schools, although there were different emphases or combinations.
- Students, teachers and parents were also asked to identify the meaning and the behaviours that would demonstrate each of the values. A Professional Development session for teachers provided opportunities for discussion to clarify the definition and the expectations for each value. In the classroom this process used a range of tools from 'Pass the Ball', 'Pick-up Sticks', a silent gallery and group discussion to 'unpack' the value. Parents were asked to complete a survey to identify a common understanding of the values and a behaviour that might demonstrate each. The information collected was then used to facilitate further discussion as the students clarified their understandings.

Process

Having developed an understanding of each value, students working in groups, were given responsibility for one of the values, to research the meaning, to brainstorm ideas for presentation, to reflect on occasions where they, or other students might demonstrate the value and to develop a storyline or setting for the value. At this stage, the development of the presentations from each school varied according to the interests, skills and interpretation of the students. These included:

- Photo Stories presented as PowerPoint presentations and as hard copy books. Each story was school based and illustrated individual values. The students worked in groups to research, brainstorm ideas, develop a storyboard for their story, plan the photo shoot, write the text and add the special effects. The students were encouraged to take ownership of their story, interpreting the value in a way that was meaningful to them.
- The 'Thumbs Up' program was developed at Berendale to encourage the identification of positive behaviours. Posters were created and individual values were discussed using *Snapshots* as a literacy resource.
- Multi-media presentations were created, such as a television advertisement based on one or a number of the values in the National Framework, which would communicate understanding and stimulate discussion about the value.
- Groups of students wrote a script, produced and presented a short play, identifying one or more of the values. The activity included advertising the performance and receiving feedback from other students on each production.
- A 'Cluster Expo' held at the end of the project to enable the students to showcase their work on the National Framework and to provide a sharing time between schools, students, teachers and the local community. This expo was attended by student groups and parents from each of the schools and invited guests from the community during the day. An evening session provided an opportunity for more parents and students to attend.

- The 'stories' within the school were shared, generating discussion with younger students and providing opportunities for role-play and demonstration of the values in action.

Outcomes

Cluster outcomes

- development of a common language and common understanding of the values in the National Framework
- an awareness that values education is not a stand-alone process but can be integrated into all KLAs
- development of the Young Leaders Group as a forum for discussion across schools
- development of links across the cluster schools both for teachers and students.

Teacher outcomes

- development of the understanding of the Inquiry Learning process and Thinking Curriculum strategies in the classroom
- sharing of ideas, providing support and developing an awareness of other educational settings (primary, secondary and special schools)
- awareness that values education is central to the teaching and learning programs in the schools. It can be incorporated into all units of work and is reflected in the behaviour, interactions and relationships between teachers and students.

Student outcomes

- Students can readily identify the values, discuss the issues, explain the impact and demonstrate the behaviours in their environment.
- Students have been challenged, provoked and motivated as they deconstructed the values and examined the relevance of the values to their environment.
- Students have had the opportunity to examine their individual values systems and to analyse, discuss, develop and demonstrate their findings.
- Students, given the opportunity for 'self-management and self-knowledge', develop an awareness of themselves as learners, identify their own learning style and contribute to group decisions.
- Opportunities arose for students to develop leadership skills both through the Young Leaders Program and in the group activities in the classroom.