

Values Education School Forum

Distance Education Tasmania

Distance Education Tasmania (DET) provides education programmes to around 300 K–10 Tasmanian students who are unable to attend school for a range of reasons, including geographic isolation, pregnancy, illness – both physical and psychological – or because the student and their family are travelling. In addition, DET provides the following services:

- classrooms in two hospitals;
- coordination of the Online Campus which brokers the provision of online courses from and between schools across Tasmania;
- the Registration Program which enables schools to access, on a fee-paying basis, a DET educational program for selected students.

The school is well supported by its School Association which meets monthly via teleconference and then occasionally face-to-face at a central location in the middle of Tasmania. The Association has recently begun a trial, using Moodle software, to pursue an online discussion forum capability.

The Australian Government grant for the Values Education School Forum was used to promote discussion at two recent face-to-face forums with the Association.

At the first meeting in mid-2006, a group of fifteen parents discussed the values that they thought underpinned the school and also those that they would like to see in the foreground of the school's activities. Material in the *Values Education for Australian Schooling Kit* was used to stimulate discussion. These values were then provided to the parents in summary form. The parents used the summaries as the basis for informal discussion with their sons and daughters to ascertain their children's thoughts about what they valued and what they saw as existing values in their classes and grades.

At a subsequent parent meeting in early 2007 these conversations with students were discussed. The parents were interested in the difference between the sets of values of the parents and the students. Parents rated as most important *care and compassion*; students rated as most important *freedom ... making your own choices*. Other values that were important to the two groups are below and clearly show that in most areas there was commonality in values held:

Parents	Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care and compassion • Honesty • Responsibility • Creativity • Tolerance and inclusion • Respect • Doing your best 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom ... making your own choices • Honesty • Respect • Responsibility • Doing your best

Participating parents have commented favourably about how much they, and their children, enjoyed talking about the values that their school holds or should hold. As principal, the discussions were an invaluable way for me of coming to know families and their values more deeply.

Lyn Dunn
Principal

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