

National Values Education Forum 2007

Values Education in Practice: Making Connections

Thursday, 3 May 2007 and Friday, 4 May 2007, Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre, Melbourne, Victoria

Day 1 Student report

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Three of us from Antonine College, Rose (Year 10), Mario (Year 10) and Antonio (Year 9) attended the National Values Education Forum on Thursday 3 May 2007. It was an opportunity to see what it is like to go to a forum for teachers. It was quite interesting and full of information, though we have to admit that we did switch off at some points as we got lost in the 'teacher talk'.

We came to understand that teachers have to do more than just teach their subject areas, such as teaching values throughout their classroom teaching. We realised that it is difficult to be a teacher these days and that those who do it must be really committed.

Neil Hawkes, an educational consultant from the UK gave the Keynote speech on values-based education and later we had an opportunity to interview him.

'The only way to really learn what values education is really about is through our own experiences' Mr Hawkes said in the keynote speech. He talked about a childhood experience at school where he had submitted a piece of writing he was quite proud of and was criticised by his teacher, 'Mr Smith' for his writing ability. Unfortunately, Mr Smith's criticism and comment that Mr Hawkes was a 'bad writer' meant that he continued to believe he was a bad writer well into adulthood. It wasn't until he was 44 years old after someone commented positively on his writing in a magazine that he actually started to believe he was a good writer.

We learnt that values-based education changes the relationship between students and teachers. Values education is about inspiration. Teachers must have the desire to want to teach in different ways; not just teach a specified subject but to also want to understand where students are coming from and what could be bothering them outside of class. Students may possibly be going through a rough time at home and they may not be getting love and understanding from their families.

Some advice for teachers that we took from Mr Hawkes: If teachers are having a bad day, take a minute with just silence, no noise in the background, and just calm yourself down, leave all your troubles behind and never take it out on others. It is important to have teachers who can smile!

In the interview with Mr Hawkes we discussed two quotes he made during his keynote speech: 'The most important thing a human being can do is to love' and 'Every child is loveable and capable'. Mr Hawkes stated that many people do not understand adolescence and what teenagers have to go through biologically and emotionally. Brain changes during the adolescent stage, especially in males, means the adolescent lacks the ability to detect emotions in adults and this could

explain why teenagers spend so much time fighting with adults. He suggested that maybe students should leave school at 12 years of age and come back at the age of 19, especially males! Less drastically, we could make schools more 'teenage' friendly. Mr Hawkes said that, 'Students in the 21st century want meaning and purpose'.

We went to a workshop 'The values story' run by Seaford 6-12 School from South Australia. They spoke about the methods they used to introduce values-based education to their school and community. Teachers and students were given the time to discuss values and then everyone agreed to their school values after developing an understanding of what they meant. They allowed the students to talk about what they valued rather than just giving the students a list of values. They put up signs for the agreed values, like 'Respect, Friendship, Happiness', around the school.

Overall, the Forum was a worthwhile experience and we gained an understanding of values-based education. We hope to take this understanding back to our school community.

Thank you to Gary Shaw, Values education project officer for Victoria, for giving us this opportunity.