Youth & Conflict (presentation notes)

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Slide 1 Introduction

Values have emerged as a hot topic in recent years as Australia grapples with such issues as cultural identity, citizenship and environmental sustainability. Increasingly schools are being asked to articulate their values and translate these into practice. Values based education is for many schools central to achieving quality learning and teaching outcomes. This presentation will introduce some of the themes and research associated with current thinking in values education, quality teaching and particularly how this can contribute to safer schools and the health and well-being of students and staff.

Slide 2 Aims

Key policy documents include the National Frameworks for Values Education, Safe Schools and Drug Education.
http://www.valueseducation.edu.au/values
http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/publications/2004/NSSF

At a state level documents include the Victorian Essential Learning Standards, Safe Schools Are Effective Schools and the Framework for Student Support Services.
http://www.education.vic.gov.au/

Such documents provide schools with guidance in the delivery of curriculum and the implementation of relevant approaches to student wellbeing.
Civics and citizenship education with a focus on youth participation and teaching for democracy is also a useful approach.

Restorative practices have been used by many schools as a philosophical framing of activity that requires a shift from behaviour management to relationship management.

It is also important to acknowledge the current conditions of schools and the capacity, interests and needs of teachers prior to implementing any social intervention.

Slide 3 Beliefs

- An optimal learning environment is one in which teachers and students feel comfortable, safe and valued; an environment that is caring, engaging, challenging and promotes autonomy, where people have some control over their learning and where theory and practice promote relevance and authenticity. Such environments provide living examples of democracy at work and ensure that young people can practice and rehearse skills of active citizenship, conflict resolution and peace. It is such environments that learning flourishes.

My beliefs about education reflect 30 years experience and looking at the relevant evidence regarding effective learning environments.
e.g – my own experience as a researcher with young people under 15 who have come to the attention of juvenile justice authorities, teaching experience, Gatehouse Project, Student Wellbeing Project, drug education projects, values education initiatives, restorative practices and civics and citizenship education initiatives.
These beliefs maybe somewhat idealistic and represent an aspirational aim however I am confident that an increased emphasis on student centred curriculum and school wellbeing is more likely to produce sustainable learning outcomes than a teacher directed or examination based environment.

Slide 4 CRE & PE in Australia

- Focus on prevention
- Whole school approaches
- Includes relationship building, reduction of bullying, social skills development, violence prevention, peer mediation, restorative practices and human rights education

For the purposes of definition, peace education and conflict resolution education are blended into a mix of approaches when applied to Australian schools. Peace education as a particular topic has currency in some states such as Queensland but generally education systems incorporate CRE & PE through the provision of safe, supportive learning environments. This includes attention to such things as relationship building, reduction of bullying, social skills development, conflict management, violence prevention, peer mediation, restorative justice and multiculturalism etc.

These are typically implemented as a whole school approach.

Slide 5 Values & Citizenship

The backdrop to the Values Education Project has been reflected in a more universal concern for terrorism, environment and economic imperatives. Cultural identity, nationalism and patriatism are just some of the areas of public discourse.Some are suspicious of the power and processes used to dictate values. Clearly the idea of a values debate has the potential to polarise or divide. This may well be the case if values are seen to be mandated and raises the questions about who owns values.
Australia is a multicultural society with more than 23% born overseas.

Waves of migration, particularly from war zones, have challenged our notions of citizenship. In schools this discussion is better to be housed in a formalised framework than to be incidental.

For example the term 'being un-Australian' is meant to denigrate this unfortunate term and implies an informal Australian standard. The values dialogue requires much broader understandings of our diverse community before people can be labeled un-Australian.

Slide 6 What kind of Australia do we want?

Needless to say multiculturalism has been brought into sharper focus in a post-Cronulla Australia. Cronulla is a beach suburb of Sydney that became a focus of racial violence in 2005. Questions of national identity, patriotism and citizenship have percolated alongside a values discourse that has become increasingly impressed on our collective psyche. Values have been traditionally linked to patriotism and national identity. Sushi Das in an opinion piece in the Age (March 10) suggested that the values debate is largely a waste of time and alarmist.

Hijacked by politicians, dissected by academics and regurgitated by a largely unquestioning media, the so-called debate has muddied the waters of Australian identity and unnecessarily alarmed many Muslims.

Das is also cynical of the view there can be a discrete set of Australian values and that they are somehow different from those held by other countries.

The notion of school values, beliefs and attitudes and how these are connected to behaviour is a very important discussion in terms of school determining their educative purpose, what values are appropriate and important in promoting good citizenship.

Slide 7 Aboriginal / Australian flag

This Image was painted by Simon, 12 year old indigenous student with his vision of how Australia could be. It represents the indigenous flag – red land / black sky and yellow sun in the centre – next to part of the Australian flag's royal blue and stars of the Southern Cross.

Indigenous Australian apology was made by PM Kevin Rudd in Feb 2008. This was an important step in reconciliation and healing following the often unjust and misguided treatment of Indigenous Australians.

"Today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history. We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were stolen generations –this blemished chapter in our nation's history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australian history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence into the future".

Slide 8 – Nine values?

Nine values for Australian schooling

Derived from VE Study 2003
http://www.valueseducation.edu.au/values
Reference only – most humanitarian values / attributes / behaviours.

Beliefs influence feelings and attitudes which influence behaviour.

Values
Values are standards by which people measure their beliefs and behaviour.
e.g. belief in christianity – aspiration to values of forgiveness, honesty and kindness.

An attribute is a positive behaviour that typifies one's values and beliefs.

Slide 9 Definition of values

- Values are the priorities individuals and society attach to certain beliefs, experiences and objects in deciding how they will live and what they will treasure. (Hill 2004)
- '…the principles and fundamental convictions which act as general guides to behaviour, the standards by which particular actions are judged as good or desirable'. (Hamstead & Taylor 2000)
  National Framework 2005

**Slide 10 What is in a value – Activity**

Aim

To examine the values from a personal perspective. Develop an understanding if what the values mean particularly how they might be played out in school.

Using flip cards with values written on them have group select values that they most like to see in their classroom. Ask participants to describe an example of when they see this value.
Acts as a prompt to discuss the translation of values to action and then can lead on to discussion about strategies for improving school climate, behaviour, relationships etc.

Slide 10 The Values Domain
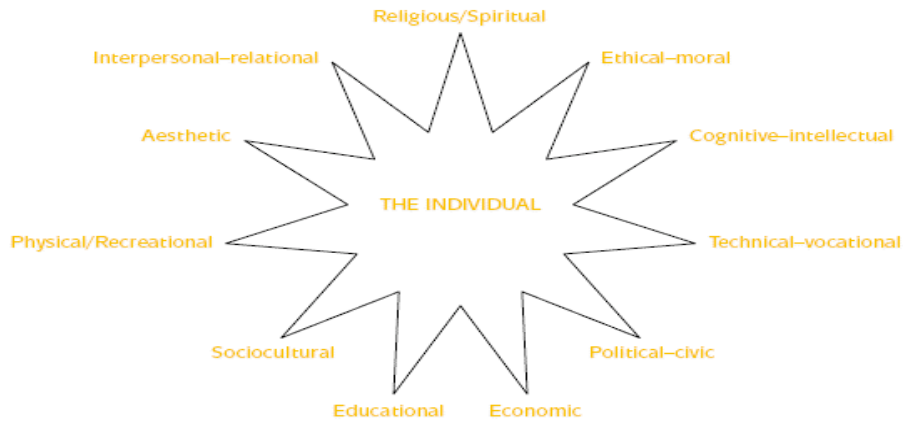
The truth is there are many value domains. They are not owned by any one particular group.

The ways in which we play out standards of behaviour and act in relations to others reflect our values.
Ref Values for Australian Schooling Kit – available on
http://www.valueseducation.edu.au/values

Use examples
e.g. Road rage! - Personal response to stress
Mother Teresa – Peace prize / life of caring and sacrifice
John Howard – Conservative Prime Minister fell out of favour

Slide 12   Guiding principles for effective values education

• Helps students understand and apply values
• Explicit goal of schooling
• Articulates the values of the school community
• Whole school approach
• Safe and supportive learning environment
• Trained and resourced teachers
• Curriculum which meets individual needs of students
• Regular review

Based on the *Values Education Study* (2003) and subsequent consultation, the *National Framework* provides these guiding principles for effective values education. While values education is a challenging area of school education the work that has been done supports these principles.
These principles clearly outline:
• that values education is not only about understanding values but about putting them into practice in a supportive learning environment;
• that values education is explicit;
• that values education must be developed in partnership with the school community and as part of a whole school approach to educating students to ensure consistency, a sense of ownership and joint commitment;
• that values are incorporated in the curriculum in ways that meet students' individual needs;

- that teachers are trained and resourced to provide values education;
- that values education outcomes are reviewed.

Slide 13 I learn best when …..

Students are more likely to seek help from teachers when the teacher
- Smiles at me
- Says hello to me
- Takes an interest in what I do
- Organizes fun activities
- Sets interesting work
- Notices my effort
- Helps me to learn from my mistakes
- Encourages me to join in

Simple cost effective strategies that everybody can engage in.

Research from the Youth Research Centre at the University of Melbourne.

This highlights the behaviour of teachers that is most likely to lead to students seeking help from the teacher.

The links between quality teaching and a values based environment are apparent.

Slide 14 Gatehouse Project – teaching for emotional intelligence

Connectedness: security, communication and positive regard
Strategies
- Reducing risk factors, e.g. absenteeism, bullying, low academic achievement
- Enhancing protective factors, e.g. positive relationships, sense of security, involvement and participation in school decision making

The Gatehouse Project, Centre for Adolescent Health provides us with good advice about improving well-being, relationships around 3 central principles:
• building a sense of security;
• enhancing skills and opportunities for communication and
• building a sense of positive regard

Another key factor that has been consistently referred to in the school change, middle years and resilience literature is the nature and quality of relationships in schools. Relationships in schools and particularly between staff and students has been shown to be central to the success in dealing with change (Fullan, 1999; Benard,1996)

Slide 15 Lalor Secondary College

School values have been determined by students in consultation with the teachers. Values are far more powerful if the students are authentically

involved in the formulation of the values underpinning school policy and practice.

Doing things with students rather than to or for will prove a more rewarding experience for teachers and students.

The findings from the Good Practice Schools Project suggests that when students are placed at the centre of the development and implementation of values based education then there is greater student buy in. Again this should be housed within a whole school approach.

Slide 16 Values education and quality teaching

- We venture the view that , by making values an explicit and central part of the curriculum and our day to day work with our students, we can produce improved student outcomes in terms of intellectual depth, communicative competence, capacities for reflection, self management and, most importantly, self knowledge (Toomey,2007).

Within this process the children and the teachers acquire (as distinct from them being given it):
- Intellectual depth (for the children not facile or shallow learning but rather more complicated thinking like perceptiveness, analysis, evaluation, intuition and the like - all the things we bring to mind when we say some one is "sharp", "bright" or the like. For the teachers, greater insight into ways of getting the message across).
- Communicative capacity (For the children, being able to talk and reflect about the process of exploration, how they engaged it, what outcomes flowed from it, what they learned, how it was learned and related issues. The growing capacity to do this is accompanied by a confidence in and a commitment to the process of exploration and working with others on it. Engaging the process in this way helps them to shape themselves and others through their capacity for communication. For the teachers, more sophisticated ways of talking about their practice and improving it).
- Capacity to reflect (for both teachers and children being able to think back to an event or some other act, consider the impact it had and plan in at least an intellectual sense how things might have been made better.)
- Self management (For both teachers and children being able to work with others and eventually on one's own on the intellectual aspects of values and subsequently living them out.)
- Self knowledge (For students, getting to know oneself better and becoming more comfortable with self thereby giving rise to more poise in the learning process. For teachers, getting to know oneself better through changed relationships with the children and thus becoming more confident to try new things). (Lovat, 2005)

Slide 17 – Murtoa College

Murtoa College's 12 values arrived at through a whole school approach.

Whole–school approaches in general means:
- there are agreed (shared) values and vision directing school practice
- the curriculum includes student wellbeing, the school organisation, environment, policies and practices
- attention is paid to prevention where most activity occurs, early intervention and intervention.
- school leadership, teachers, students, parents and the wider community seek to collaborate and share the responsibility for developing a community of learning
- the practices are inclusive and multidisciplinary.

Slide 18 Restorative Values

- Personalism – a wrongdoing is regarded as a violation of people and relationships and the harm extends beyond that suffered by the victim.
- Reparation – the goal is to repair harm and put things right. What needs to be repaired depends on the circumstances of the wrongdoing and in particular the nature of the loss or injury.
- Re-integration – the process should facilitate reintegration of the offender.
- Participation – the people who are most directly affected by the wrongdoing–victims, offenders and their communities–are collectively involved in the resolution of the offence and its implications for the future (adapted from Roche, 2003 pp27 - 32).

Restorative justice is a values based philosophy that if implemented properly through a range of practices will
- Facilitate an environment of safety, trust and connection.

- Promote relationship management rather than behaviour management

- Be concerned with relationships in which rights to dignity, concern and respect are satisfied.

Slide 19 School Climate - Activity

If you were making a five minute documentary about your school or organisation what would you show?
- What would you highlight?
- What messages would you give?
- What would you leave out?
- What emotions could you convey?
- What things are treasured?

Further questions:
What values and beliefs underpin your teaching?
Relationship with students?

What might be the big issues for students?
Do I fit in? Do the other kids like me? Will I be bullied? Will I pass? Quite possibly it will come down to personal well-being and success, safety and connection.

Envisioning the future
Our emphasis is on what is (or what is not) more than what can be
Our challenge is to envision – see the future to change the present
Values are as much about asking questions about who we are and who or what we want to be.

Slide 20 Effective Schools Model

Effective schools model contains the evidence base for school improvement, safe, purposeful and positive school culture.
See
http://www.education.vic.gov.au/proflearning/schoolleadership/program/leadef.htm

Slide 21 Further information

- Victorian Values Education
- http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/programs/valuesed/

- National Values Education
- Curriculum Corporation
- http://www.valueseducation.edu.au/values/