

Values in NSW public schools

A Ministerial Statement
by Hon Andrew Refshauge, MP,
Deputy Premier
Minister for Education and Training and
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

March 2004

Values in NSW public schools

A Ministerial Statement
by Hon Andrew Refshauge, MP,
Deputy Premier
Minister for Education and Training and
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

Supported by the Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations
of NSW, NSW Teachers Federation, Primary Principals' Association,
Secondary Principals' Council and Public Education Council.

March 2004



The NSW approach to values and values education in public schools

Values

NSW public schools have always taught the values that are the basis of law, customs and care for others in our society.

Values shape attitudes to the changing circumstances, events and issues encountered in daily life.

Schools in NSW share with families and the community the responsibility for teaching values. While values are learnt predominantly in the home and modified through relationships and life experiences, parents and the community have high expectations about commonly held values also being taught in schools.

The demonstration of these values in all areas of public education is both the aim and a measure of success for public schools.

Values education

Public schools teach values, including the values that underpin learning. Public schools also provide students with opportunities to explore the values that lie behind diverse community attitudes to political issues and social concerns.

Values are taught explicitly in classrooms and through the activities and relationships of the school and its community. In schools, core values influence how people communicate, work together and make decisions. They are reflected in the policies and procedures of schools and the Department.

Values guide student welfare and discipline, how the school communicates with parents and the opportunities for staff, students and parents to participate in decision-making. They also guide the learning experiences that are provided for students and how they are provided. Values contribute to all individual and group decision-making in the school community.

This NSW approach to values education involves community consultation, statements of values, school programs and teaching and learning strategies that demonstrate how to make values explicit in a range of learning contexts. A national and international review of literature supports this approach.

The NSW approach recognises that the core values are taught in all classrooms and in school communities. Reflection, explicit teaching and discussion of the core values are essential for schools to communicate to the public the values being taught to students. The approach to values education in NSW underpins every area of school life in our public schools and avoids the containment of the teaching of values to one-off programs, often additional to the curriculum, or focusing on only one area of teaching or school activity.

The core values

The Government recognises the importance of the following core values to the community. These values represent the aspirations and beliefs of the Australian community as a whole, including its concern for equity, excellence and the promotion of a caring, civil and just society. They are common to a range of secular and religious world-views and are found in most cultures.

The core values are:

INTEGRITY

Being consistently honest and trustworthy.

EXCELLENCE

Striving for the highest personal achievement in all aspects of schooling and individual and community action, work and life-long learning.

RESPECT

Having regard for yourself and others, lawful and just authority and diversity within Australian society and accepting the right of others to hold different or opposing views.

RESPONSIBILITY

Being accountable for your individual and community's actions towards yourself, others and the environment.

COOPERATION

Working together to achieve common goals, providing support to others and engaging in peaceful resolution of conflict.

PARTICIPATION

Being a proactive and productive individual and group member, having pride in and contributing to the social and economic wealth of the community and the nation.

CARE

Concern for the wellbeing of yourself and others, demonstrating empathy and acting with compassion.

FAIRNESS

Being committed to the principles of social justice and opposing prejudice, dishonesty and injustice.

DEMOCRACY

Accepting and promoting the rights, freedoms and responsibilities of being an Australian citizen.

Values education in NSW public schools

In classrooms

Teachers make values more explicit by including strategies that highlight the core values in their lessons. Discussing the meaning of core values as they occur helps students to develop their understanding of these values and how they operate in a variety of contexts.

The K–Year 12 curriculum in NSW public schools provides many opportunities to teach, demonstrate and explore values.

Teachers assist students to understand school policies by modelling and reinforcing behaviour consistent with the core values.

In school communities

Values influence all actions and decisions, not only in classrooms, but also in the wider school and its community. Students also adopt the core values by observing the good models provided to them by members of the school community.

A comprehensive and multifaceted approach to values education results in the core values informing every aspect of school life.

Student learning outcomes

The primary focus in classrooms is learning. Values influence how students learn, the way that they learn and what they learn. In the process of learning students develop:

- knowledge and understandings from the key learning areas
- skills and competencies in communication, problem solving, planning, organisation and research
- literacy and numeracy skills
- confidence in using new technologies
- safe and healthy lifestyles
- ecologically sustainable practices
- core values
- employment related skills.

Outcomes of schooling

Values influence the way students think, speak and behave. There has always been a strong focus on the importance of values in relation to the achievement of the educational goals and outcomes of public schooling. Some of these broad goals include:

- love of learning
- high standards
- care and respect for self and others
- care and respect for families and communities
- respect for work
- fairness and social justice
- pursuit of excellence
- being active citizens of Australia and the world
- appreciating Australia's history and multicultural society.

Social outcomes

Schooling is also about the future. Our community looks to today's students to determine the world of tomorrow. Through classrooms and school communities the core values of NSW public schools will contribute to a society that:

- values all people
- assists and empowers individuals from disadvantaged groups to actively pursue improved employment, personal and life opportunities
- contributes to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- is comfortable with cultural and linguistic diversity
- is compassionate towards others in need
- is aware of its heritage
- develops social cohesion
- empowers individuals to become active participants in the democratic processes of Australian society
- values the contribution of public education to the future of all Australians
- rejects violence, harassment and negative forms of discrimination
- supports peaceful resolution of conflict.

This document is the result of two years of work with parents, teachers, principals and school communities. The contribution of the Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW, NSW Teachers Federation, Primary Principals' Association, Secondary Principals' Council and the Public Education Council is appreciated and acknowledged.