

## VALUES – HOW IS MY SCHOOL DOING?

### Conduct a Simple Values Audit

These questions can be used in a variety of ways and contexts. For example:

- A principal, parent or teacher can sit down alone and quickly work through them to make their own assessment, to get a sense how the school is going - or identify points for discussion or more detailed reflection, using the further focusing questions
- A school staff group can work through collectively (e.g. as PowerPoint slides) and similarly focus on issues to develop a culture of inquiry (\*) and collegiate learning, or consultative discussion with the parent community
- Parent groups can work through collectively and similarly identify points for collective discussion with school staff through a similar process of reflective inquiry
- A joint discussion group of school staff and parents can use this as a framework agenda and jointly identify any matters for further joint exploration, reflection and joint action.

(\*) See in particular the excellent paper prepared by Professor Alan Reid for the South Australian Department of Education & Children's Services "Towards a Culture of Inquiry in DECS" (2004) at: [http://www.schools.sa.gov.au/corporate/files/links/OP\\_01.pdf](http://www.schools.sa.gov.au/corporate/files/links/OP_01.pdf)

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Possible focusing questions for reflective inquiry:
<b>About Students:</b>				
1. Have you ever discussed how you can make life for students safer both psychologically and physically?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How have these led to positive actions and improvements?</li> <li>• Do we need to renew those discussions?</li> </ul>
2. Do you have a policy - and practice – of reducing shouting and loud voices?				
3. Is every child involved in discussions about your values policy?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are these discussions embedded in good classroom practice?</li> <li>• Is the process a participative one?</li> </ul>
4. Are there activities which help them put these values in practice?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are these activities?</li> <li>• How often/regularly to they happen?</li> <li>• Indicators of positively changed behaviours?</li> <li>• Other things we could do?</li> </ul>
5. Do you discuss these values as staff/parents/jointly?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can we make the process fully inclusive and participative?</li> </ul>
6. Do you have policies which encourage staff to treat each other with respect and consideration				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the spirit of these policies reflected in action and the ways we work together?</li> </ul>

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Possible focusing questions for reflective inquiry:
7. Do you have staff whose explicit role is to mentor new teachers?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what ways is that improving how we work?</li> </ul>
8. Do you have a policy about bullying –for staff and for students?				
9. Are students who do well given feedback and praise?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what ways do we do this?</li> <li>• Are there other things we could do?</li> </ul>
<b>About Parents</b>				
1. Do you have policies and practices which make parents welcome in the school?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are these working in practice?</li> <li>• Do parents feel welcomed and comfortable in each aspect of contact with the school, or are there some aspects they find difficult?</li> </ul>
2. Are you aware of all the ways in which the school seeks to communicate with all parents and families?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the messages getting through in ways everyone understands and can act on?</li> <li>• Are some methods more or less effective? Why is this and what can we do about it?</li> </ul>
3. Has the school reviewed the written information it sends to parents from the parents point of view ie, does this have meaning for them?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we need to set up a cyclical review process ?</li> <li>• How are parents most effectively involved in this</li> </ul>
4. Do you have a strategy to include all parents in some way in the school's life e.g. reading with students, sport, drama, music, cooking..?				
5. Do you believe that this inclusion strategy is effective?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we know it is working appropriately and on their terms for all our community?</li> </ul>
6. If you were a parent coming to the reception area, would you feel welcome?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do all our parent visitors feel the same way?</li> </ul>
7. Do you think there are other things we need to do to make parent visitors feel welcome?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we know what else we should do?</li> </ul>
8. Do you have policies and practices which take into account those parents with English language difficulties?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well are these working?</li> <li>• How can we identify what else we could do?</li> </ul>

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Possible focusing questions for reflective inquiry:
9. Do you have a strategy for dealing with potentially contentious issues in relation to parents?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we know if there are instances or issues where this strategy could be improved?</li> </ul>
10. Do you have a website which is aimed at making parents feel welcomed, informed and engaged?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it up to date?</li> <li>• Does the content reflect and meet the real information and communication needs of all your parents and families?</li> </ul>

You will notice that the questions are not about flags or icons like national anthems; they are about the way we all treat each other.

How did you score yourself?

If you answered yes at least 16 times, then you are teaching and practising basic values in your school.

If you answered yes less than 16 times, then it would be worth setting down in a discussion forum and working through the questions to see how you may be able to improve things, in one or more specific aspects, or right across the ways things are done in your school and community.

(You might wish to counter-check your own personal responses to the questions by having other staff members or parents do the same questions and cross-check with your responses, in private)