



Dynamic Values Newsletter Summer 2011

Welcome to the Summer edition of the
Dynamic Values newsletter.

In Issue 2 we are very pleased to share with you:

- Enrich their paths! - Values through mathematics – a conversation with Sue Pope, Professor in Education at Liverpool Hope University, who shines a light on the many ways in which values infuse and enhance learning in mathematics.
- Becoming a Values-based school – how Tracey Smith headteacher at Bladon Primary School in Oxfordshire set about transforming her school through a values-led approach.
- Child-centred Values-based leadership – Julie Carr, headteacher at Lyneham Primary School describes the remarkable effects of distributive leadership amongst her pupils.

If you have experiences you would like to share about values, we would love to hear from you! Please contact Bridget, Jane or Neil at

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Values Quote of the season:

The difference between a flower girl and a lady is the way she's treated.

Eliza Doolittle

FANTASTIC THOUGHTS and FABULOUS (Summery!) THINGS TO DO

1. Start a values garden. Some schools have developed Values gardens with their communities to encourage reflection, contemplation and relaxation. Why not do the same?

2. Ask the children to describe what values has meant for them this year... invite them to think about significant moments and how values have helped them in their learning journey. Record thoughts on leaf shapes for a whole school values tree, or on coloured flower petal shapes and attach them to green garden canes and stick them in a tub to make an internal values garden! Keep these as part of your own self-evaluation processes.

3. Go on a Values Walk around your school with your School Council or Family Forum. Where are values evident in the school landscape? What messages does each part of the school send about your philosophy? Draw up an exciting proposal to improve and enhance!

REFLECTION TIME

People may forget what you say...
they may forget what you do...but
they won't forget the way you made
them feel.



*"I love that my son is learning all these values at school because it **mirrors** what we are teaching him at home and it helps to reinforce the important things like manners and caring for one another."*

Parent, Maybury Infants School

Where are Values in Mathematics?

What is your definition of successful learning in mathematics? To be a successful mathematician is to be successful at life itself! Here are just some of the personal and social skills to be found in a well-conceived mathematics curriculum:

Critical, independent thinking

Listening to others

Working with others

Articulating views and reasoning

Valuing the various processes of enquiry

Developing tenacity and perseverance in resolving problems

Reviewing the implications of mathematical decisions on the self and society

Reflecting on problems, issues and learning

Successful learning in mathematics, then, means engaging on every level – physical, emotional and spiritual, dispositional, social, linguistic and cognitive.

Engaging the learner in real world learning

We spend our whole lives amidst mathematics, engaging in number, listening, communicating and making sense of patterns. Our world, when you think about it, is governed by number, by time, money, shape and form. Sue argues that therefore one of our principal jobs as teachers must be to enable pupils to develop an 'at homeness' with mathematics - so that they have a good sense of how things are represented, can make sense of information and have the power to communicate mathematically in their world.

Schools that operate a values-based curriculum find meaningful ways of exposing children to creative and imaginative mathematics. They focus on giving children the confidence to tackle mathematics in an authentic context, and do not subscribe to the view that children must master the foundations before ever being allowed to move to problem-solving and investigation. This, says Sue Pope, is like saying you can't ever have a game of football until you have become an expert at dribbling and shooting!

Planning for a class party– and thereby learning the value of sharing in monetary and practical terms - is an important event in a child's life, as is carrying out a project to find and fundraise for a local charity or making a life-size drawing of a dinosaur on the playground. These are just some of the ways in which schools bring learning in mathematics to life. Staff at Madley Primary School in Herefordshire have worked with their children to enhance the values-based curriculum, matching learners' choices and interests with the curriculum offer. The result is a curriculum that is rich in first-hand and varied experiences that take place both in the classroom and outdoors and off-site and that teach the purpose and relevance of mathematics in our lives. Lee Batstone, Headteacher feels it is imperative that pupils have the opportunity to aspire.

In the woods or with a maths problem, we make our values explicit... You don't give up when you experience discomfort or fear and you help each other to learn.'

Building self esteem

The essence of excellent teaching and learning in mathematics lies in the value and respect we place upon the child as a learner and in what we see mathematics as being, offering and standing for, argues Sue Pope. The responses we make to children about their learning have a profound impact on their self perception. Sue advises that the best way to deal with 'wrong' answers is to always ask the child how they got their answer – you might find that their thinking and methodology has actually been more sophisticated than you had realised. We should make constructive use of errors and misconceptions: there is a profound shift in attitude that can be brought about by simple language changes. Simply changing our language from 'That's not the right answer' to 'That's a learning answer' can bring about a shift in climate self perception and attitudes, and an entirely different response from children to mathematics as a subject.

Investigate which questions children keep slipping up on and talk to them about it.

What other methods do you use in your classroom to build self esteem? Discuss this as a school.

Igniting a passion for learning

Why is it that so many of us come with hang ups about mathematics, certain that 'I'm no good at/was never/will never be *any good at* maths'? Why is it that so many girls in particular feel that they cannot do mathematics?

Sue Pope contends that this stems from the myth that mathematics is about absolutes, that there is one right answer to every question and that mathematics is a subject that works on tramlines, admitting no wrong turns and few variety of routes. We need, she says, to be giving children the confidence to tackle mathematics 'in the round' and develop in our learners an inquisitive approach so that they can develop a pleasure in exploring mathematics for its own sake. Children love questions that start 'The answer is 42 (say), how many different questions can you make?' Or 'What is the hardest calculation you can think of that has the number seven in it?' Apart from being a very useful and relevant diagnostic tool, this kind of 'playing with number' opens possibilities for learners, encouraging creativity and inspiring confidence.

Research on mental calculation also shows the importance of children having the opportunity to reflect to see what is really being asked of them, and to select from their repertoire the method best suited to them and the task. Mental methods often involve adapting the given calculation to one that can be done easily and confidently with well known and understood number facts and relations. Children who are used to reflection as part of their broader education approach are well placed to apply this skill in mathematics. Children also need to have the confidence to choose for themselves when a calculator or spreadsheet and how to interpret the answers. For example, 2.3 might mean £2.30, 2300g, two lots, three lots, two hours 18 minutes or... depending on the context.

Many values-based schools are already making excellent use of Philosophy for Children to promote and develop thinking, reasoning, speaking and listening skills but have you ever considered using it as a basis for mathematics development? The ability to make connections and not be afraid can be very empowering, and is not just something for mathematics. This skill pervades the whole curriculum but mathematics allows a different lens through which to appreciate the world because things can be quantified.

For example, pondering together 'Why is it that 20% is the same as one fifth?' enables getting children to wonder and to probe their own understanding of something abstract but also leads to something that is very useful to know!

Exploring questions such as 'Where does zero come from?' 'When did people start to count?', 'What mathematics do people use to make buildings (from the pyramids to the Gherkin)?' allows learners to appreciate how mathematics pervades human activity through history and in modern society and is part of our common heritage.

How much play and exploration do you encourage in your teaching of mathematics?

How could you create opportunities for more?!

Enabling learners to flourish – a teacher's own values-system.

To enable all this to happen we need to think also about the whole disposition a teacher brings to and communicates through the teaching of mathematics. It is imperative, says Sue, that learners and teachers share the view that **everyone can do mathematics!** The Programme of Study - and therefore an equality of opportunity - is an entitlement for all children. These high expectations and the equality of opportunity this brings are critical if our children are to become the mathematicians we wish them to be. Remember, children can surprise you when you give them the chance!

How far is this true in your school?

How do you communicate your values-system in mathematics?

'Enrich their paths' – developing Creativity and Confidence in mathematics

- How can you re-conceptualise mathematics as a creative activity?
- With a colleague, talk about some successful approaches to engaging children in mathematics through the curriculum. It all works best when we inspire creative personalised, tailored local! solutions and strategies – not off the shelf ones.
- How often do your children have the chance to surprise you?

Give children the chance to do things differently, and enrich their paths!

Becoming a Values-Based School

When I began at Bladon, children's behaviour was determined by school rules. It appeared to be the case that these rules permeated through not merely the behaviour of the children, but also their attitudes, beliefs and relationships with each other. But there was an underlying feeling of disrespect, of grudging adherence to teacher-imposed rules in order that time at play should not be lost; the consequence of breaking a rule.

Becoming a values-based school has transformed everything. The end result is that we have commonly-shared values, led, orchestrated and endorsed by the children, that define and shape our school community, one of which everyone is proud to be a part.

The process was engaging and enlightening; all stakeholders were invited to play a part in the process and so inevitably have shared ownership of the result, which is fluid and ever-evolving in itself. Initial meetings, musings and consultations morphed into a Values Working Party comprising of pupils, parents, teachers and governors. "It is great to feel that my views were as important as all the adults." (Year 4 pupil).

Throughout the process, the Working Party consulted with the whole school, through class meetings and assemblies, being careful not to merely engage with the older pupils, but with pupils who would be at the school longer, enhancing the sustainability of the process.

Our values are communicated through school displays, logos, literature and website <http://www.bladon.oxon.sch.uk/values.asp> and form the focus for our assemblies, lessons, discussions, celebrations and expectations. "We don't have any school rules at Bladon, we have values", a Year 5 pupil told a visiting LA rep. "If one of the little kids does something silly, we just remind them of our values of "Respect" and "Being the Best we can be", then they do it properly", (Year 6 pupil). "Our values mean we treat people how we want to be treated", (Yr 1 pupil).

Everyone who visits our school comments on the incredibly positive behaviours, expectations and relationships which are tangible within school, subsequently rated "outstanding" in a recent report. It has been **the** most important process contributing the school improvement and the lives of all involved. I am moving on to a new school in September and see the process of becoming a values-based school as the most crucial foundation of school improvement.

Tracey Smith

Bladon Primary School, Oxfordshire

How are you feeling today?

Shared values leadership. What is it? What does it look like?

I never dreamt that a leadership achievement award for any pupil in our school, which meant being the head teacher for the day, would lead me, as a head teacher, to feel so humbled by such an experience.

A day in the life of Caitlin age 10, acting head-teacher for the day

It all started on day 1 of the new school year, around 8.30 as all the children and families were making their way into school, when Caitlin came up to me with a friend and the conversation went something like this... (You need to have seen the body language to have got the tone-she meant business and there was no saying no to her!):

"Have you got a minute?" Mrs Carr.

"Is it urgent Caitlin as I'd like to welcome children back after the long break."

"Yes," she said. "It can't wait."

"Well you better come this way..."

Caitlin and her friend Sophie then proceeded to outline a plan for raising funds for the victims of flooding in Pakistan. They knew exactly what they wanted to achieve and had even had the road map all ready:

"We want to wash staff cars, in our own time, to raise money-we've got it figured out. We'll see staff and give them time slots, charge £4.00! —a conversation then pursued about keeping the change from a fiver!

As they went out the door, they nonchalantly said to me, "We'll just pop and see the business manager and get the risk assessment sorted!"

What a great idea I said and off they went! Next thing we knew, high visibility jackets were being wafted along the corridors and some mention of health and safety training and car washing skills with Bob the caretaker in hot pursuit!

By lunch time on Day 1 of term 1, I had their business card on my desk, an excel spreadsheet documenting the time slots and received a personal slip on my desk letting me know when my car was booked in for its wash. Within 2 weeks they had washed all staff cars-around about 30, and raised £150.00. Yes you've done the maths! I think this is what is meant by personalised curriculum. I was inspired by her entrepreneurial skills but most importantly her moral compass was incredibly strong!

She was well on my radar for her use of values in a leadership role to make a difference, to rally a team effort, to be assertive, clarity of where she was going, how to get there and take her team with her. She was so believable. I have watched her develop and grow through the year and decided that it was time for her passions to be rewarded and to set in motion a new Headteacher award-for anyone in school who showed such values led leadership. The reward for this is to be acting head teacher for the day. WOW!

Caitlin could not believe she was going to hold such a role and was so excited when she heard the news! But also her class teacher was thrilled because she felt a boost in her life was much needed. In fact, there was a flurry of excitement and preparation leading up to the day: the right clothes had to be worn, the standard senior leadership silk pink scarf had to be found, the high heels needed to be just right...so many staff rallied around to prep the day for her so it would be extra special.

I had a mixture of emotions, I wanted her to have such a special day and yet felt anxious about my vulnerabilities, and felt exposed.

Caitlin arrived promptly at 8.30 and looked fabulous-every inch the professional. She was offered a cup of tea by the school PA Tarryn. (my little bit of heaven on earth). Tarryn had also prepared a special file labelled Ms L-Acting headteacher and carefully selected post for her to deal with-all with little post-its asking for signatures etc.

However, she opted to do the rounds amongst staff, children and parents and meet and greet as she knows I do this most days and leave the post! How sensible but it told me a lot. The way in which she greeted people took my breath away. She asked the same of everyone-Not... How are you? But... How are you FEELING today? Caitlin knew the importance of people's feelings and how we make people feel is what we remember-she knows this because she comes each day to a values led school where feelings matter.

By 9.30 post had been dealt with and she sped to a meeting with the School business manager who needed to seek her advice about a health and safety issue; riding bikes and scooters on school grounds. She just fell into role and suggested an assembly to model and demonstrate good choices! She was scarily good!

Ms L had especially requested to lead a learning observation of younger children and she was very happy to do so! She talked with the children looked in their books and talked with the teacher. At lunchtime she fed back to the member of staff without any support. Starting with "tell me how you think it went" ... and then she graded the lesson as 9½ out of 10.

She went on to give out achievement awards in assembly in front of children, staff and parents and even welcomed a hall full of around 50 families who were in school for a fun family values event making large values posters to display around our school.

As the afternoon came to a close, we went back to her office and we both took off the high heels and ate chocolate and drank tea, with other members of staff popping in and some joining us!

We chatted about the day:

Caitlin has missed her friends and they had missed her! She was so much in role that her friends said, "When can we have the real Caitlin back?" She told me it felt lonely being a headteacher. I said that it can be and I had also had that same feeling.

She was quite overcome and very tired as I was. Her mum came up and hugged me and planted a very large box of chocolates in my hand and said, "You will never know how much this day has meant to Caitlin?"

To which I replied, "Likewise!"

I spent much time thinking about why I was so touched by my day with Caitlin and came to this conclusion: she had so internalised what a values school should be like in what she said and did as the headteacher. She showed all of these values led leadership qualities:

- Leading with a moral compass
- Knowing what matters
- Emotional literacy by the bucket load
- Caring
- Sincerity
- Authenticity
- Hope
- Telling it how it is

What I was feeling was PRIDE and felt hugely humbled after spending all day by her side.

Julie Carr

Headteacher Lyneham Primary School

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