



Jan/Feb 2009

# Newsletter

Special points of interest:

- Developing the moral life of schools



## First Newsletter for 2009

Apologies for the late publication of this newsletter.

Good luck to all schools, Principals, senior managers and staff for the start of Term 1!

Cartoon by Nicholson from "The Australian"  
[www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au](http://www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au)



## ***Moral matters: Five ways to develop the moral life of schools.***

Kia ora tatou, talofa lava, malo e lelei, greetings.

The final newsletter of 2008 left you with some thoughts about the inclusion of values into your school curriculum in response to the 2007 New Zealand Curriculum. Specifically, the message of that article was that there is a very slippery quality about the concept of 'values' and it may be easier to provide a list of suggested 'values' "To be encouraged, modelled and explored" (2007 *New Zealand Curriculum*, p. 10), than it is to actually state precisely what values are, how they are to appear in the curriculum and why you would bother in the first place.

Some holiday reading that aimed at addressing these questions focussed on a recent book, by Stengel and Tom (2006), entitled *Moral matters: Five ways to develop the moral life of schools*.

Stengel and Tom suggest that there is more to school than just academics. Their book is a meta analysis of a range of research and evidence of actual practice in American schools that attempt to develop moral education.

The writers acknowledge the climate in which there is a call to schools to somehow help arrest the general decline in the moral climate of modern Western society. They argue that there is a place for moral learning in schools, but suggest that "we are not well prepared to talk reasonably about moral matters in public settings" (2006, p. 8).

In the previous newsletter, it was suggested that there is a difference between 'values' as priorities and 'values' as a collection of views and ideas about enhancing or creating the

'good life'.

Stengel and Tom would look to the latter, as they call 'the moral' an attempt to achieve right relations between people in such a way as to make sense of life. Included here are social constraints, democratic virtues and individual integrity.

They refer to 'the academic' as the attempt to create common understandings and to come to know what others know. They include here content standards, critical thinking and great ideas, to name a few (2006, p. 28).

They suggest that the following categories of moral education are present in modern American school settings:

- Separate

Neither moral nor academic dominate, nor do they affect each other. Character education programmes fit in here.

- Sequential

Both moral and academic are important, but one must precede the other. The writers mention the 'Boy's Town' initiative as an example.

- Dominant

One is clearly dominant, and gets strong support and resourcing. Church schools are an example where moral is dominant; 'cram colleges' where academic is dominant.

- Transformative

The one melds or blends with the other; a sense that one can strongly influence or change the other. Nel Noddings who argues that care should influence education strongly would be an example of this model.

- Integrated

There is no boundary between academic and moral; the one influences the other in a relationship that helps both to grow positively. Typical examples include efforts to introduce ideas of social justice and democratic thinking into the curriculum by connecting the curriculum to real life.

The conclusion Stengel and Tom draw is that these categories highlight the differences in the way 'moral' might apply to schools and they also represent different views about the relations between teachers and students. The first three categories see teacher and student as independent of each other; the last two see place for far greater dialogue and relationship between teacher and student.

They also suggest that where moral and academic are separate, it is more likely knowledge will be seen as a static body passed on by an 'expert', whereas the blending of moral and academic is more likely to favour greater negotiation and debate between students and teachers.

Finally, the writers suggest the need for much greater openness about the moral, and argue for a discussion about its links to the academic.

Added to this conclusion is a plea for wariness in simply 'bolting on' in an unthinking way a random list that may have little or no meaning to your school or its community merely for the sake of being able to say: "Values? - sure, we're doing those".

## We sing your song! Tailored education solutions.



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Mockingbird Education Management Consultants has been established to provide high quality professional advice, service and support to New Zealand schools.

#### It is a consultancy based on:

- Trust
- Quality
- Professionalism

#### Mockingbird understands that:

- Principals and Senior Managers are busy professionals
- Middle Managers need support and guidance
- Schools have to achieve results

Therefore, Mockingbird will work closely with you to identify the advice, service or support you require and how best to deliver that to you, your senior managers, staff or school community.

## Business Activity

### Term 1 Business Activity

Term 1 has started at a cracking pace, with Mockingbird Education Management Consultants undertaking work in the following areas:

- Appraisals (Principal level)
- Teacher Only Days on the NZC
- On-going NZC implementation work
- Strategic Planning

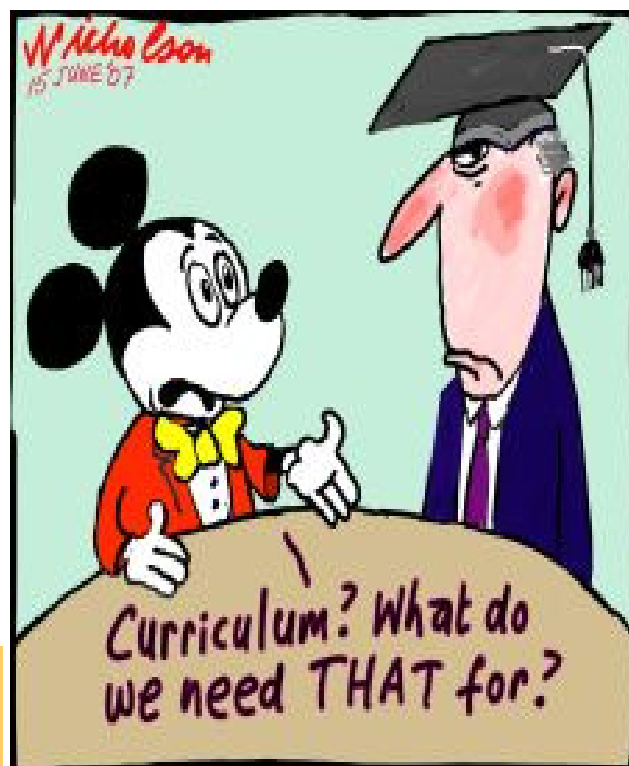
### Term 1 client schools

Kaikohe West School  
Whangarei Intermediate School  
Holy Family School, Porirua  
St Pius X School  
Park Estate School  
St Mary's School, Avondale  
Whau Valley School, Whangarei

## Upcoming Professional Learning Opportunities

### BT/PRT Workshops

Dates & venues have not yet been set for 2009. As soon as dates and venues have been established, these will be advised by email flyer.



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