

PANEL

PRACTISING TEACHERS PRESENT HUMANE EDUCATION INITIATIVES

FACILITATOR: CYNTHIA BURNETT

PRESENTERS:

GAIL D'ARCY (RUNCORN HEIGHTS PRIMARY, BRISBANE QLD), CARMEL LOANE (HOLLAND PARK PRIMARY, BRISBANE QLD), ALYSIA KEPERT (NARROGIN AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE W.A.), MICHELLE READ-ZORN (BRIGIDINE COLLEGE, ST IVES N.S.W)

GENERAL INTRODUCTION (CYNTHIA BURNETT)

The panel comprises practising teachers who have a very sincere interest in animal welfare issues and are involved in doing very good things in their classrooms and in the actual curriculum development of their schools. Their presentations will enable them to demonstrate some of the excellent initiatives they manage to fit into their very busy curricula.

GAYLE D'ARCY

Introduction

Gayle is currently Head of Curriculum at Runcorn Heights Primary School here in Brisbane. She has been in this non-teaching position for the last approximately three years and prior to that was a full-time classroom teacher, Years 6 and 7 in the primary school, doing wonderful things with her students in terms of animal welfare issues in the classroom. And I had the pleasure of being invited, once or twice, to address those students as well, to complement the work that was being done by the teachers.

Presentation

The humane education journey for Runcorn Heights State School, where I teach, began right here at Griffith University in 2003 when I attended Professor John Fien's lecture, *Learning to Care: Education and Compassion*. I had been a member of Animal Liberation Queensland for 25 years, a practising teacher for 15 years, and so I was really interested in what Professor Fien had to say about ways to promote compassion in classrooms.

In his lecture he referred to the work of Professor Nell Noddings from Stanford University, who has written that schools give substantial amounts of attention in the curriculum to environmental problems, but insufficient attention to the development of caring human beings. Students in today's schools, according to Noddings, learn about eco-systems, food chains, the threat of extinction to endangered species and habitat preservation. But, she asserts that too often teachers focus on faraway places when presenting children with examples of environmental challenges. As a primary school teacher, I certainly related to what she said, having taught units of work on China's endangered pandas on many occasions!

Nell Noddings' belief is that children have to *learn to care*, enough to want to *act*. They have to know ways to be empowered, *in order to make a difference themselves* in the lives of animals.

She also talks about organising curriculum around what she terms *Centres of Care*, in order to best develop an ethic of care in children. This was of particular interest, because at that time, my school was looking for a suitable framework around which to organise an integrated studies curriculum. Noddings advocates that the curriculum be delivered through six centres of care:

- Care for Self;
- Care for Family and friends;
- Care for Local and Global communities;
- Care for Animals, Plants and the Natural Environment;
- Care for the Human-made World
- Care for Ideas.

Back at school we examined whether a *Centres of Care* framework could be used to guide the delivery of required outcomes in various Key Learning Areas such as Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE), Science and the Arts. We found that indeed it appeared to be a useful integrating device for curriculum delivery and by the start of 2004 we began implementing a modified version of the Centres of Care across the whole school. In relation to Humane Education, the Care for Animals, Plants and the Natural Environment element of the framework ensured that, for a whole term, once every two years, each child in the school would learn to care for animals. This is continuing and will do so for the foreseeable future.

Coincidentally, at around the same time that our school was considering the implementation of the Centres of Care, I read in an Education journal about the work of Brisbane primary school teacher, Carmel Loane, the next speaker. Carmel had recently won *Discovering Democracy* awards for her innovative integrated units of work for upper primary classes where Government concepts such as active citizenship were developed *via* the children learning how to better care for animals. I eagerly met with Carmel, and soon my Year 7 colleagues and I implemented our own versions of Carmel's 'Better Animal Care' unit.

During the course of that unit in 2004, we incorporated current issues in the media to make the learning more meaningful for the children. The TV Current Affairs programme *60 Minutes*, for example, featured a segment about the Live Export Trade.¹ I showed the segment to my class the next day and straight away the children said, "This is outrageous. What can we do? This is wrong. It must be stopped." Children love animals so they are natural advocates for them. And children also have a very strong sense of justice. Their own strong belief that animals should not experience injustice delivers to teachers a meaningful context in which to teach children about government. The children already are motivated to write to those responsible and say, "This practice should be stopped". Therefore, they are eager to learn who, in fact, *is* responsible! And so they learn the different Federal Government and State Government responsibilities in the process.

Such active involvement engages children with government concepts in a way that a dry presentation of 'this is how our system works' never can. I firmly believe that primary school children don't retain learning about government if they cannot see any relevance in it. But if they have a purpose for their work, for their understanding, then they have something to relate their learning to in their own world.

Also at that time Animal Liberation Queensland was actively campaigning for a ban on duck hunting which we later, very pleasingly, achieved. Again during the course of the same unit of work, I was involved in a large and peaceful protest, which ABC news screened on television. When I showed my class that segment, they enjoyed the fact that their teacher was on TV and thought it was hilarious when I was shown blowing a duck hunter's whistle! Then when it came time for their own drama presentations to the rest of the school about 'Better Animal Care', they definitely wanted to include some elements of a protest. Their repertoire of how active citizens in a democracy work to bring about change was expanding!

¹ Live Export Trade: The export of live animals, most commonly sheep and cattle, to overseas countries, for slaughter.

For these drama performances, each small group of children chose a spoof of a current TV show as a fun way of getting across the information they had researched about animal care.

For example, one group had a quiz-type format where, instead of *Who Wants to Be A Millionaire?* they performed *Who Wants to Be a Pet Owner?* Children in the audience had to answer questions, and another teacher was their pre-arranged 'Phone A Friend.' Other segments included *Pet Idol*, *Extreme Pet Makeover*, and *Pet Court with 'Judge Joel'*. I think the drama segments were really successful and when the children from other classes were questioned later, they had retained a lot of information about animal care.

Later on, the children's show, *Totally Wild*, approached the school asking to film a segment featuring the Responsible Pet Care presentations. The children, of course, were highly excited, and had a lot of fun, both on the day Channel 10 came to the school and on the day, months later, when the segment was broadcast and they became TV stars!

After the drama performances were over, one of my students asked if the Year 7s could now raise money for animal charities such as the RSPCA and Animal Liberation. He suggested a school fete.

And so, for the next term, the children organised the fete stalls and on the 'Furry Friends Fun Fest' Day, the entire school came out of their classrooms for a couple of hours to spend their money on a good cause! Hopefully they learnt more about animal issues as well.

We raised \$2,000 at the fete which the children were very proud of. The Year 7s got a great sense of satisfaction in knowing that they made that event happen and knowing that they could make a difference. They felt, once again, empowered.

The following year, the movie *Charlotte's Web*, was coming out towards Christmas. Through my Animal Liberation contacts, I knew that Chris Adams, an *Animals Asia* volunteer, had also agreed to take on the care of two pigs which had been involved in the filming of *Charlotte's Web*. I wondered about the idea of developing an integrated unit which linked the issues in common between intensively farmed pigs in Australia and China's moon bears, which *Animals Asia* so ably assists. Both these farmed pigs and farmed bears are intelligent animals kept in very inhumane conditions where they can't move around.

So it struck me as a timely opportunity to study apparently dissimilar animals from different continents. During the term my class visited the movie star pigs at their home on a property outside Brisbane. They were rather a lot bigger now than the little piglets they had been in *Charlotte's Web*! Of course, for many of the city-born children in my class, it was the first

time that they had ever seen a real live pig. The two young pigs were such characters - incredibly affectionate and fun-loving animals. The children in the course of their integrated unit saw the difference between how these two fortunate animals were allowed to live, compared to the intensively-farmed pigs they researched on the internet. Once again, they expressed their sense of injustice about this, just as the class the year before had done. They decided to hold some Christmas fundraising stalls in support of Animals Asia and Animal Liberation which were highly successful.

At this point it's probably opportune to mention that when humane education units are being implemented in classrooms, it's very important to give children the opportunity to research all sides of an issue where there are different stakeholders. Children must learn, for example, the reasons why intensively farmed animals are raised the way they are. Teachers have no need to be wary of promoting positive values such as 'care and compassion' in their units as long as they don't tell the children in their class *what* to think, what attitudes to have, and what conclusions to draw, about complex issues.

Whilst children in my classes clearly know my views about animals, I think it's also really important that they have a chance to learn what their own attitudes are. I remember one boy in my 2005 class said to me in informal conversation, "Ms D'Arcy, I can see that it's cruel to keep pigs in sow stalls." But to be honest," he said, "it doesn't really worry me." Intellectually, he knew the pigs lead a poor life, but it didn't emotionally affect him. So while this particular student didn't learn to care enough about the animals to want to make a difference to their lives, I could take some consolation in the fact that at least he actually could be honest with me; that he had come to his conclusion and felt confident enough that he wouldn't be judged negatively as a student.

In my current role as Head of Curriculum, I act as a facilitator when teachers in all year levels meet to plan their units of work. As mentioned previously, every second year, all students undertake a 'Care for Animals, Plants and the Environment' unit for a term. The Year 2 teachers have developed a "Frogs" unit. We have a creek just literally 100 metres down the road where frogs live, and Karawatha Forest which is nearby has more frog species than Kakadu. What was very pleasing when this unit was implemented in Term 1 last year was that for the remainder of the year, the Year 2 teachers found they had far fewer incidents of children being cruel to animals in the playground than in previous years (the school is in a bushland setting). The teachers felt this improvement could be directly attributed to the care element in the Frogs unit and this certainly was rewarding for them.

Every year, the Year 2s also undertake a unit on Australian Animals. This year, we raised a substantial amount of money for The 'Save the Bilby' Fund during Threatened Species Week.

The Year 4 teachers have developed a unit where their classes teach the rest of the school community about the effect that the litter they drop in the playground may have upon the marine creatures of Moreton Bay. Those Year 4s became quite passionate anti-litter campaigners this year! And the Year 6s also look at the creatures of Karawatha Forest in more detail. Last year, with the death of Steve Irwin, they looked at the Great Barrier Reef, and the animals there, and the threats to the reef.

So that is a snapshot of the humane education journey that our school has been on over the past few years. I trust it will continue to be expanded and improved upon in the future.

CARMEL LOANE

Introduction

Carmel is a Year 6 teacher at Holland Park Primary School, a lady with a great passion for animal welfare, animal protection and animal ethics issues. She also has done wonderful things in her classrooms with her students, to the point of actually winning awards for the animal programs that she has developed. One such award I would like to mention was an award granted to her by the Queensland Department of Education as part of a series of awards under a program called 'Discovering Democracy'; Carmel was the Queensland winner of that award.

Presentation

I will first explain briefly what I hope to achieve when I teach. At the end of each year, after my students have been working side by side with me for nearly one year, I would hope they'd reflect upon that year and say that they felt more excited about learning, that they'd learned an enormous amount of things, about topics they'd never imagined they would have touched upon, that their understanding of their world was broader, that their joy of learning had increased astronomically, and that they'd had a whole lot of fun.

As an educator, I hope that I connect my students emotionally with new knowledge, connect that knowledge with the heart. This emotional connection to knowledge has already been identified by earlier speakers as a major factor in effective learning. Unless there is that

connection, it doesn't matter so much what goes on with the head because if the students haven't felt enough, they really can't be positioned to care enough so that they ultimately have the desire to do enough. I endeavour then, to take my students' learning that one step further: not just to increase their knowledge, and increase their capacity to care, but also to foster in them a desire to do something with that knowledge and concern. I endeavour to provide for them practical opportunities to act upon new understandings.

Achieving a compassionate ethic in a global classroom is not only possible, in my opinion it is essential. The child I teach today is not simply a 'Brisbanite', not merely a Queenslanders nor an Australian. The child today is a global citizen - connected to a global family.

I concentrate on the holistic development of the global child. I particularly related to what Professor Lovat had said earlier - that while subjects such as animal husbandry, science and maths are very important, the essence of what is worth learning can be determined more by the value of that learning in helping the child grow as a social, empathetic, well-balanced human being. I think it is my responsibility to deal with the individual student wherever he or she "is at": I must address whatever he or she needs as a person. Kids need is to feel good about themselves – about their choices and actions. They need to feel wanted. They need to feel cared for and to care. They need to feel respected in order to respect others.

For me then, teaching is an opportunity to help my students to develop into better people who are better able to make just decisions, to be happy and then hopefully spread some of that happiness to others.

Developing a compassionate ethic in a global classroom requires that our children access lots of information about the world in general. This information helps them to recognise their global-citizen status. When it comes to actually doing something and applying new knowledge and understanding, however - although the global situation is considered - I primarily provide my students with opportunities to act locally, so they can make a real difference at home, in their own neighbourhood. It's important that students have a real sense of success and self-worth regarding their actions. Endorphins aid learning. Success feels good.

Information literacy is a major key in developing a compassionate ethic. Information literacy provides the learner with facts, but more importantly with the skills with which to critically analyse information and the author's intent. Today's society is bombarded with so much information, so much knowledge that it's difficult for kids to know what or who to believe, what or who to trust, what is fact, what is fiction, what's real, what's an illusion. So, it's really

important that, right from the beginning, students are given access to a whole range of literature, not just in the form of books, but in websites, video, movies, people. They need to be made aware that all information is authored by someone with an inherent bias. Students need to be able to discern what information can be trusted and to what degree – and what sources may be reliable and where to locate the same. Students need to determine for themselves what makes sense to them and their own understanding of what their world is. So, it is vital that the compassionate, global citizen be equipped with sharp skills in information (most especially visual, media) literacy.

Then there is the element and power of respect in effective learning. For me, holistic education is based in respect. If one cannot respect oneself, there's no way in the world one can respect others – great or small. True respect for humankind, for the planet, for life in general, I think requires a really big change of and merging of the mind and heart.

So, I plan to help my students be literate, connected, and respectful. I want them to know. I want them to get out there and find all the answers they possibly can. I want them to connect with those answers, to interpret those messages, to decide what are truths, what choices are possible, to take some responsibility, to take some power and to do something. I really trust kids. I have great faith in them, in what they are able to do. I think at times, adults belittle them and their intelligence: "You're only children. You can't really deal with the big issues just yet. I will respect your thoughts and opinions and listen to you when you are older..."

I strongly believe that our children are capable, thoughtful, intelligent citizens now! They can be empowered by our faith in them. They respond to being trusted and to being given responsibility. Given honest experiences and opportunities, they can reach their own valid interpretations and conclusions. They do that well.

Much of the time, we adults pour information into our children. We expect them to be like a jug - just receiving stuff all the time. I don't think we tap enough into their talents, nor their brilliance. I think they have so much to offer, so much to give, so much power in what they have to say and so much clarity in their judgement. Children can grasp not only complex concepts; they can also digest them so that they are then able to share their very clear insights in beautifully simple ways.

As one example: Last year, my students performed for the International River Symposium Delegates. We were invited to perform for them because the organisers were aware of the fact that my kids do a lot of performing re sustainability issues. When we'd finished, many of

the delegates came up to me and said, “That was just brilliant. It’s just so wonderful that your kids have really engaged with that information...They really have a message to tell, and they tell it so well.”

An earlier speaker referred to the value of reflection in learning ...I agree that reflection is a powerful learning tool. For me, the learning process is a cycle: Kids think about stuff. They look behind what’s being said. They consider who the author is, what the agenda might be there. They then reflect upon all they have learned, enjoyed. Learning is not linear. There is a whole cycle of thinking, interacting, digesting, and communicating.

What defines compassion? One definition for compassion that I especially like speaks of a deep awareness of suffering, but also emphasises another aspect - the wish to relieve that suffering. Compassion is not merely about developing an understanding that something can suffer - or recognising an unfortunate situation - it’s also about having the desire to relieve that suffering. The next big step then is to do something about that suffering - make something happen.

It’s a matter of taking responsibility - a matter of taking power. To do that successfully, as I have said, students need information. I have a particular logo on my classroom website that I think represents very well the context of the global classroom; the idea that information is coming in, it’s going around in the head, tossed about, and mixed together with the values of the heart.² The logo clearly acknowledges the power of bringing the together the head and the heart in order to achieve a really deep understanding of issues. I know that if the head and the heart are taken care of, then the feet very often willingly follow.



Discussion, experiences, feeling, caring: to me, it’s really important that information becomes personal, that kids connect with it in a really personal way. If it’s not personal, it’s not going to impact in any meaningful way on their lives.

²http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.virtualclassroom.org/images/gsbi_logo-ani.gif&imgrefurl=http://www.virtualclassroom.org/&h=161&w=145&sz=12&hl=en&start=358&um=1&tbnid=hh9Uo8fRupGu_M:&tbnh=98&tbnw=88&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dglobal%2Bclassroom%2Bimage%26start%3D340%26ndsp%3D20%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26safe%3Doff%26rls%3Dcom.microsoft:en-us:IE-Address%26rlz%3D117ADBR%26sa%3DN – a free, ‘virtual learning’

An important element in optimising children's learning is the *fun* factor. I'm a great believer that education can't be just a dry mass of facts. The learning experience has to get learners where they are. So, in a primary school situation, if I'm going to deal with some really challenging, horrible facts, figures, imagery and concepts, then I have to soften it in some way. When I deal with issues like the treatment of battery chickens in battery farming: where a 2 or 3 day-old chick gets her little beak cut off - I have to be able to present awful truths to sensitive youths in a way that presents some hope for changing the situation, there is some hope that the horrors won't go on forever. Also, it's essential that the facts can be presented in a fun way. It probably sounds weird to you right now about that – presenting horror in a fun way... but it does work! I do it through cheery songs and fun-filled but powerful dramas.

Just one step back, on information literacy. I liken the kids and all society in media, to be like fish in a fish-bowl of water. Media is around us the whole time, feeding us information; children need to be aware of that. They need to be aware that they're in this pool, and there's all this stuff milling about them, creating a reality – someone's reality, and they're not necessarily aware of what exactly that medium is feeding them and what choices are available to them. Students need to be critical readers / listeners / thinkers. They need to see what the information is being offered and what reality is being created by that information.

I try not to bring my own biases into my teaching, although obviously it's difficult not to – to some degree. But then, it is important they know I have a stance. I do, however, make it very clear to my students that their choices are their choices, mine are mine. My job is to give access to information, to help students connect with that information, so that they can make their choices as they see appropriate.

Part of getting accurate, reliable information is in the real life experience. If kids are out there experiencing things, then the learning becomes more important to them, they get the information from the horse's... or pig's mouth, so to speak.

I invite people to come in to give students their personal expertise. Students search the internet. They filter through a whole range of information sources so they can discern which sources are best, which ones are providing information that seems to have minimal, or perhaps clearly overt bias? What's being said? What's not being said?

I provide students with lots of audio-visual learning opportunities. The power of audio-visual learning has been well documented. Just last term, we did a major unit on water, which will spread over a little bit into this term, because we have to do a performance at the end of this term as well. I have used lots of movies from *YouTube*. There's some brilliant educational

material to be found there - productions that are really inspiring for the kids - fantastic. Mind you, the kids can't access it directly themselves at school. They have to go through my log-on. Education departments are still catching up with the needs of classroom technology.

I love the *Flash* movie show: *The Meatrix* (<http://www.themeatrix.com>). It's fantastic. I have embedded it into an integrated online rights program that I've developed called a *RightsQuest: 'Chickens, Eggs and You'*.³ This movie highlights well the animal emphasis of my programs which address rights issues. *The Meatrix* was able to address really awful issues regarding 'factory farming' in a fun way, but in a serious way at the same time. The students get the information, but they're not being depressed by the whole situation. They can see some hope in it.

We have a Class blog wherein students responded to the work done in the online *RightsQuest*...My students use technology a lot in the classroom - they have to really know about where the information's coming from, so that they themselves can be more empowered to use the technology appropriately... One of my student's blog response covered what she thought about *The Meatrix* movie. She reports that she enjoyed the video, found it educational, about what they do to cows, pigs and chickens. She found that Leo the pig was funny. She says: "Also, I found the history very interesting with the chickens, but I wish there was no more cruelty in this world." The student has taken on the seriousness of the content which has been presented in a fun, less confronting manner, appropriate for children.

Why is it important that kids care about issues such as 'factory farming'? Well, after Professor Lovat's speech this morning, I don't think there's any doubt as to why. I mean, that's what we are – we have this very basic need to connect with others. We're interdependent people, we're interconnected, we're part of this world, we're not separate from it. We might like to think that we're in charge of it, but every time a cyclone or a flood hits, we soon know that we really don't have all the control that we think we have, that we'd like to have. We are part of a very large interconnected picture.

So I think it's really important that kids do connect with the content of their studies and with one another. In the classroom, there's a lot of emphasis on teamwork, about doing good for other people. I get them to do a lot of tutoring. This year with our Year 2 buddies, the students ran programs in computer technology, for instance. The teamwork ethic is a whole classroom thing – a whole year thing - it's not just a one-off.

³ <http://education.qld.gov.au/learningplace/onlinelearning/courses/courses-rqu.html>

In second term, before beginning the *RightsQuest* course, I wanted the children to understand what it felt like to be excluded, to be mistreated - for no other reason than someone had the power to hurt. I think it's really important that kids learn to feel other people's feelings, as in empathy. You are probably aware of the blue eye experiment where people were treated in very different ways depending on whether they had blue eyes or brown. I sometimes use eye colour, but sometimes I use the ability – or not to tongue roll. It depends on what I'm doing with science at the time. In this case, I did tongue rolling.

I asked the students: "Who can roll their tongue? Who can't?" We approached the investigation from a science / math viewpoint. It is always good fun. Later in the day the students were lined up ready for a swimming lesson. From that moment on – for the next 30 minutes - I treated the groups separately and very differently.

This was a half hour lesson. In that half hour there quickly developed among the non tongue rollers an enormous sense of guilt and a strong feeling of "What have I done? It's my fault." The non-tongue rollers could not understand why they were mistreated and why I should be so unfair. This was a students' response to having been treated during the lesson. Anastasia wrote:

"Today, we learned about discrimination by experiencing it ourselves. This morning, we were divided into two groups: the tongue-rollers and the non tongue-rollers. I was a non tongue-roller. This morning, we went swimming, and when we lined up, the non tongue-rollers had to line up at a distance from the tongue-rollers. I felt excluded and unwanted."

After the 'experience' we'd discussed different words that described how they'd felt, then we'd watched a video called *Freedom Ride* about Black rights in Australia during the 60's – about their rights to swim in Council pools. We then compared the experiences and feelings.

Anastasia continued, "When we got to the pool, we took off our shoes and the tongue-rollers had to put on their shoes in a separate area. Then we finished changing and we had to sit away from the tongue-rollers. I felt victimised when this happened. When we finished our laps of the pool, the tongue-rollers had free time, while we sat down at the edge of the pool and tried to roll our tongues."

Mind you, for the next couple of weeks, I had kids coming to me, "Look, Miss Loane, I can almost do it – I can almost roll my tongue!" I said, "Darling, you don't have to try, you don't have to change!" But they would say: "No, no, but I want to!" So, even after that, they still desperately wanted to fit in. They wanted to be like everybody else. It was just amazing.

Anastasia continued, "I felt that this was unfair and I felt it was unequal that the tongue-rollers... When we finished, we had to do another lap. Afterwards, we had finished getting changed, we sat down, and Miss Loane gave all the tongue-rollers chocolate eggs. And the non tongue-rollers just had to sit there and not talk. I felt hurt and I was thinking, 'What did I do wrong?' "

It was a powerful lesson that connected my students to the pain of cursory exclusion. It made them connect to the situation of rights to freedom. Those who were privileged also felt emotions ranging from guilt to smug glee.

More responses in our Class blog refer to learning about animal cruelty. Students speak of not liking finding out about the cruel things, but also understood that in order to do something; they must know and understand the facts around the issue. They like getting the facts.

But, learning for children is about balance. As I mentioned earlier, fun is really important factor. We do lot of in-role activities, dressing up. We have forums, where they take on the roles of different people, so that they can see there are different angles and how they can be presented.

This is one of our songs. It is called 'Don't Buy Battery Eggs'. I'm going to sing a little for you. It goes:

Don't buy battery, say no to cages.

Don't buy battery, say no to cages.

Don't buy battery, bwark-bwah!

Maybe barn laid, Yes! to freerange eggs.

I saw three chickens in a cage.

What I saw filled me with rage.

Each lived in a cage less than size A4

Their weary eyes pleaded, "Can't you give us more?"

You maybe ask, "Why is this so?"

The answer is simple: Some people don't care. Some people don't know.

People worry more about better cash flow.

Don't buy battery..."

It goes like that!

There are about five verses like that one highlighting things like if you're looking at egg cartons, you've got to be sensible and be aware that advertisers try to subtly persuade the buyer with clever use of colours and words. The kids and I created that one together, so it was pretty cool.

My SOSE⁴ planning is based around the Earth Charter, the idea of respect and care of community of life. We call it 'ecological integrity', so you can see therein the need for citizens to be informed, connected and respectful. My 'RightsQuest', of which I'm very proud, was funded partly with \$5,000 from the *Voiceless*. The Education Department came to the party also funding about three times that amount. The online learning course is so very powerful, so wonderful. My last 2 classes have worked through it and LOVED it. It's available at The Learning Place. It's free to Education Department people.

Students learn about chickens, about respecting chickens, about 'respecting' full stop! They research a breed of chicken, and they tell each other about it. Then they find out about eggs. They run surveys and education campaigns: "Choose your eggs with Care". What follows is one students' reflection on the study recorded in the major assessment item - a hyperlinked Powerpoint presentation:

"Many battery farms often deceive the consumer by either putting happy chicken photographs on cartons and they put the word 'battery' or 'cage' so it's as difficult to find as possible."

My students have reported after visits to supermarkets: "Miss Loane, I couldn't find the word 'cage' anywhere." Often it is placed obscurely on the back of the carton.

As a class we do a lot of performances in support of the RSPCA. In 2005, in King George Square on a Saturday, the students roamed around singing our "Say 'No' to Battery Eggs" song. Another class performed at the RSPCA's Million Paws Walk. I try to get them 'out there'.

During our Mothers' Day campaign: "Sows are mums too." we enjoyed some really powerful responses. The parents really come on board when I do my stuff. It's really awful material that the students deal with. I mean, they find out about the cutting of the piglets' teeth, the chopping of their tails and all that sort of stuff - all horrific. But, because the issues are dealt with in such a way that the kids are engaged, they're excited about the whole thing. They are horrified, but they also feel empowered. They feel they can do something about it, and they

⁴ SOSE Studies of Society and the Environment

want to do something about it, so the parents are really supportive of the whole program. I actually encourage them to be involved as well.

Students regularly get the newspaper. They always like to be famous. They'll do anything to be famous, but it's great for the profile of the issue too. An article in the paper allows the kids see their efforts are valued by the broader community.

For our Mother's Day campaign we enjoyed support from Government sources as well. Mr Rudd (perhaps a future PM) sent the students a letter of commendation.⁵ We received also a letter from State Ministers.

One year, I invited several schools to be involved in our campaigns. That was about Better Animal Care. Over 500 students were involved in this 3 – day celebration at Holland Park.

Water is another very important sustainability issue that my students investigate. My programs are not just about animals. I hope my students cultivate a compassionate ethic toward all life. My programs are all about empowering my students, helping them become respectful, global citizenship. I mean, I do use animal studies as a really powerful vehicle for learning, and I think that it's important to help kids connect with the plight of the disadvantaged, but we also do a lot of study, play acting, and linking to the importance of a healthy earth, linking to healthy friendships and relationships with people, taking our sense of responsibility beyond the classroom, looking after our buddies, and wanting to be sustainable, respectful of others.

In closing, I hope you enjoy this most recent of our song productions. I tend to write songs, and/or get the kids to help me with it. This particular one was developed with a student teacher I had last term. We penned the lyrics together with the kids. He was a very talented guitarist, so that was a large motivation for the choice of music. The idea for the lyrics was to bring together all the issues that we think we should care about – issues we had studied – broad sustainability issues. The song is called *Respect Tears Down the Walls*. It is sung to the tune of Pink Floyd's *Another Brick In the Wall*

(Plays DVD of children singing 'One Planet for All', to the tune of Pink Floyd's 'Another Brick in the Wall')

⁵ Kevin Rudd became Prime Minister of Australia in November 2007

ALYSIA KEPERT

Introduction

We are most grateful to Alysia Kepert coming all the way from Western Australia. Alysia is a practising farmer who also, for the last five years, has been teaching Agricultural Science at Narrogin Agricultural College. I asked her where the program she's teaching fits in with what Nigel Grant has outlined in terms of those three course-type components, and Alysia's answer was that it is general agricultural education combined with some vocational training preparation. She works with Years 11 and 12 students.

Presentation

I am a teacher at Narrogin Agricultural College in Western Australia. I come here with a slightly different angle on things and into this setting with a little initial apprehension. However, at the core of what we are all here for today, is a shared interest in animals. Probably there will be aspects of the agricultural industry as a whole that some of you may not be happy with, but I am here to showcase the initiatives that we are making to change that.

I will start with a promotional DVD for the college that shows the students working with animals. The college has quite a varied program for Years 11 and 12. Students enrol in either a trades or an agricultural program. I deal principally with the agricultural program. It is important to acknowledge that the students produced the relevant section of the DVD themselves, so the wording is theirs, not adult wording.⁶

The College runs 3,292 acres. We also lease an additional 750 acres. We are a commercial farm, two hours south of Perth and educate in that environment.

At the moment we have 2,800 sheep for wool and prime lamb production, 100 commercial cattle, 28 stud cattle and 44 in a dairy herd. We have a working dairy; all the milk goes through the kitchen and is used by the students. We also have 43 horses and 1200 poultry. It is quite a substantial enterprise.

The college has 450 hectares in crop: wheat, oats and barley. At the college we have 53 staff involved in teaching, training, administration and the residential area (it is a residential college, where the students live) as well as cleaning and kitchen staff. . We also have a

⁶ Contact Narrogin Agricultural College <http://www.narroginag.wa.edu.au/> Narrogin.ac@det.wa.edu.au Tel (61) 08 9881 1255 for a copy of this DVD.

registered training organisation (RTO) stamp of approval. Narrogin College is thus registered nationally as a training organisation.

I am fortunate in that I work with both the adolescents and the animals..

The college caters for Years 11 and 12 only. This year (2007) we have 114 students. . Approximately 30% are females. That figure is increasing every year because of the equine program; a lot of them want to enrol as they can have their own horse at school, feed it before school and ride it after school.

Traditionally, the students come from farming backgrounds, but more and more, that trend is changing. Although students still come from farms, we are getting students with no prior experience in agriculture whatsoever. Although, traditionally, it was seen as a place for farmer's sons to go, that demographic is definitely changing.

The College celebrated its centenary in 2006.

The majority of students still return to the farm, go into traineeships, or they go into some sort of agriculture-related employment, or into some other type of work.

However, with a new course of study available, they now have the opportunity to gain direct university entrance. This is a big additional advantage. One hundred percent of students graduated from the college last year.

It seems that Western Australia has quite a different system of agricultural education from the eastern States. There are five agricultural colleges similar to Narrogin, i.e., commercial farms, and there are a few metropolitan schools on the outskirts of Perth that have perhaps 30 or so animals.

The beauty of the college is that the students are actually immersed in agriculture; everything they do is within an agricultural context. When they graduate they have satisfied two different systems. They receive a West Australian Certificate of Education (WACE)., But they also do skills training, which gains them a Certificate II in Agriculture, which is a vocational education, so they achieve both by completing the one course. .

Within those two systems as well the students study plant production and marketing, animal production and marketing, business and English. And we are very fortunate that we work in a team of five teachers very, very closely and we try to actually integrate the students' task work as much as possible, so that they are actually covering animal production, business and English at the same time. They don't actually realise their study has passed through

three teachers to get an assessment to satisfy three different subjects. We aim for that; it takes a lot of work to do it, but we are getting there. This is the beauty of our system.

And students don't just learn about caring for animals by theory. They are actually immersed in the environment. They are dealing with them on a daily basis, and that enables them to work for better outcomes as well, and I think there's quite a distinction that needs to be made about learning about something, or even in the environment, and working towards a better outcome for everybody. That is what we are aiming for.

Teaching and training program

Our farm is, by far, our greatest resource. It can't be underestimated how much it provides in terms of learning opportunities for the students. We follow the farm time so our curriculum during the year determines our teaching program.

We look at the calendar from February, when the students arrive, until October or November, and say, "What's happening on the farm then?" And then design our teaching program so that it's actually aligned with what's happening on the farm. When the sheep are lambing, we are learning about managing lambing. When we're harvesting, we're talking about harvesting. So the farm dictates how we teach.

We have very strong industry links. For example the stock firms, Elders and Landmark, come in quite frequently, whether to talk about animal marketing strategies or animal identification. The Department of Agriculture is also very strongly connected with the College. I think that's very, very important, because they're the people who are providing the most up-to-date information to the industry, and it's important that we are teaching in Best Practice fashion.

Excursions are conducted on a regular basis. I do sometimes teach in a classroom, but a lot of my 'classroom time' is spent outside, in the environment. We have an old bus that goes out in the paddock and we actually there to look at soil or look at animals, whatever we're doing, to keep the kids engaged. It's fantastic.

Excursions also include trips up to Perth, where we go quite often for the things that we can't do at Narrogin to increase the industry link. For example, the students manage the sheep during the year. They shear them and the wool is sent up to Perth. Then we follow that through and watch the complete selling process. The students then have a broader perspective of what actually happens, rather than just managing one aspect. The students also carry out work experience, to back up everything that we teach them on the farm and in

the classroom. They go out on a work experience program and actually work in industry, to apply what they learn.

In Year 12 the students elect to be a part of an enterprise, to be a co-manager, if you like, of an enterprise. I'm in charge of the sheep enterprise group that, this year, consists of three students who have elected to take on extra responsibilities and management.

The students also attend an Agricultural Advisory Board meeting. The Agricultural Advisory Board comprises knowledgeable people from industry and every decision that passes through the College has to go through the Board first. The students actually make the decisions and take them to the Board for approval. .

This process gives them 'real-life' decision-making abilities. At the same time they see the possible constraints associated with making a decision. "Can you make this decision?" "Well, no, because there's no finance." "Well, what's Plan B?" So they actually get exposure to the real world.

Ethical animal production

That leads me on to the nuts and bolts of the presentation: ethical animal production at the college. As we are an agricultural educational institution using animals in our teaching, we fall into the category that adheres to the Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes. .

For example, teaching how to drench cattle has to be approved before it can be conducted. We work as well as we can and try hard to meet all the requirements placed upon us. It just takes a little time and patience to work them all out, but we are well on the way. .

The Code of Practice led to the formation of the school Animal Ethics Committee (AEC), which must review and approve each procedure, each one classified on a scale from one to five, depending on the severity, or the risk, if you like, to the animals. A level one activity would be an observation in the paddock or equivalent, where the animal is not touched. Severity then moves upwards through classifications two, three, four and five. Five is the end point: the animal is slaughtered. It involves keeping records of exactly how many animals are used, the teacher-student ratio and the student-animal ratio. The 3Rs – Replacement, Reduction, Refinement - are applied where possible but obviously 'replacement' is quite hard to achieve on a working farm. The Western Australian School Animal Ethics Committee Guidelines can be accessed via the following link: <http://www.animaethics.wa.edu.au/>

Of the nine core values in the National Framework for Values Education I have selected the following, highlighted, values that I consider we specifically follow in the particular context of animals:

- **Care and Compassion**
- Doing Your Best
- Fair Go, Freedom
- Honesty and Trustworthiness
- Integrity
- **Respect**
- **Responsibility**
- Understanding, Tolerance, Inclusion

We need to engender respect for animals, and care and compassion, and we also have a legal responsibility to look after animals and of course to make sure that they are fed and looked after accordingly.

Narrogin College has taken definite steps to improve animal welfare. For example, in accordance with the industry norm at the time, we had 1,200 hens in cages. We have converted to the barn style layer hen housing system ahead of the required schedule to do so. The conversion from cages to barn resulted in reduced production. The farm's poultry enterprise is its most profitable and the conversion has cost us income. It is not easy for the College to cope with this loss but we are endeavouring to be more welfare-conscious in the running of the farm. It comes at a significant cost and loss of production, but we are doing it as an industry standard.

And of course there is the big M-word: mulesing.⁷ We are still mulesing. The phase-out time is 2010. However, we have taken initiatives to reduce the impact upon the animal:.

- a) We use a nationally-accredited muleser, a contractor, who has gone through the process of being accredited.

⁷ Mulesing – the surgical removal of strips of wool-bearing wrinkled skin from the breach area of a sheep (usually the Merino breed) as an antidote to the onset of fly-strike, which can cause the animal a protracted and painful death.

b) We apply Tri-Solfen topical anaesthetic spray to the wound.

These measures also come significant cost. It actually costs us more to do it, but we absorb that cost. I also teach the future of mulesing in our teaching program. The archaic practice started in the 1920s; it is being phased out and is to end nationwide by the end of 2010. I also use very good resources put out by the Department of Agriculture that teach about selecting sheep that are naturally bare-breech, without compromising production. And we use resources like these to look at the longer term view of trying to get animal production plus welfare combined, so that everyone can be happy.

Shearing instruction is assisted by an operator direct from industry. They come with industry skills and industry standards and we believe that is the right way to go about it.

Every year, I have someone from the WA Shearing Contractors' Association come to audit our animal handling facilities. Part of that is looking at the facilities in the context of our safety, as in occupational health and safety, but also for the animals as well, to see what improvements we can make to make it less stressful for them.

Students learn about the need for "clean, green and ethical" animal production in response to consumer demand. The training programme (i.e., hands on learning) allows students to become competent in national standards relating to the care of health and welfare of animals. The teaching programme incorporates codes of practice, responsible animal ownership so that animals' needs are met and also the legal requirements of the industry. In recent times the Department of Agriculture has produced several industry guides e.g., *Is it fit to load?* which are invaluable as teaching resources.

Our teaching program has a strong sustainable agricultural production element. Just recently, we took a bus trip about an hour and a half north of us to a sheep innovators' day, showcasing some of the latest technology. One of those was an alternative to mulesing, the intradermal injection.⁸ So we do expose our students, as much as we can to the latest developments. If something comes up that is relevant, we collapse our programs to give the students access to those latest developments.

We have included some controversial issues in our teaching, which is to be anticipated as many students are sons and daughters of farmers, so they've actually had real life experience dealing with particular issues. The most topical ones are 'live exports' and mulesing. The students recently developed and carried out a survey on these issues,

⁸ A needleless intradermal injection technology that causes the treated areas of skin to die, form a scab and then fall off, leaving an increased natural bare area around the breech.

interviewing metropolitan as well as country people, and compared the results. The exercise highlighted the presence of a broad spectrum of views, the need for informed opinion and, to facilitate this, a flow of information in both directions.

My own philosophy is to encourage students to be proactive in their approach to agriculture, and to develop their own perspective based on a wide range of balanced information. It will not benefit the students if I give my opinion on what I think about a particular situation; I can only expose them to as much and as well-balanced and broad-ranging information as possible, and allow them to make up their own mind about what they're going to do.

This is where those involved in teaching and learning in some way and, at the same time, concerned that animals should be responsibly, respectfully and humanely cared for, can help us. These are the challenges and opportunities I see at the moment in terms of working with animals. At the moment, the students arrive on Day 1 of Year 11 and begin to learn about chemical safety, bushfires all the rest of it, - all those hundred other things that have been mentioned for which there is no time in the curriculum. But I think there's a distinct element missing, and that is 'Working with Animals'. There needs to be some formalised induction into working with animals.

Students definitely have some misconceptions regarding animal production practices, passed down by Dad or Mum or Grandad or whatever happened 100 years ago on the farm. And it's a challenge to break some of those and introduce a kinder way to do things.

Promoting agriculture as a career for young people is very hard, too, because it's not seen as an attractive opportunity in a lot of cases. It doesn't usually earn a great deal. In Western Australia, agriculture just does not compare with the money to be made from the mining boom, where one can earn \$80,000 per annum driving a truck on a mining site.

Agriculture is continually changing by the day and it's very, very hard, as a teacher, to keep up with the latest developments and to impart the most up-to-date information to our students when it changes so readily. It's not like maths, which generally stays the same. It changes daily, and we have to be at the forefront of those changes.

One of the biggest challenges when trying to incorporate ethics and values related to animal production is time.

Teachers are pushed for time to cover all curriculum requirements as it is. It then becomes an issue of prioritising, and animal welfare should be a priority in our teaching programme. I think we currently cover it adequately, but I also think we have room for improvement. The

development of factual, unbiased teaching resources can certainly assist teachers in addressing ethical animal production.

In closing, I'd just like to say that we need to respect each other's opinions and realise there are going to be different viewpoints. But at the core of everything is our common interest in animals and animal welfare, and it's a matter of working together and identifying the key elements that each of us have in common, and try and work, as an industry, and in education as well, to bring that all together.

And I want you to realise, too, that we are trying our very, very best, because nobody wants to see animals being treated cruelly. I guess farmers have the extra incentive of good animal production practices usually resulting in a better income as well. So it's just about bringing all that together.

MICHELLE READ-ZORN

Introduction

Michelle comes to from New South Wales, where she teaches at Brigidine College, St Ives. Her particular teaching area of expertise is Technology and Applied Studies, but she also runs an animal welfare program within the whole school environment – not just within her own classes. Michelle also took it upon herself to establish a website and an organisation called the Australian Humane Educators' Network (AHEN) and through that website Michelle is aiming to provide networking opportunities for teachers, practising teachers who are interested in taking up some of these issues in their classrooms including useful ideas and guidance for getting started.

Presentation

Brigidine College is located on the North Shore of Sydney. It is a independent Catholic girls' school. The school has a population of around 850 students.

Students are drawn from surrounding north shore suburbs and also from the Northern Beaches area. Most of the students and staff have companion animals and most have more than one. Some of families have hobby farms in regional areas in New South Wales and, of course, they have animals on those farms. The College also has a very competitive equestrian team.

The College was founded by the Brigidine Sisters. Saint Brigid of Ireland after whom the College is named is the patron of domesticated animals, in particular, dairy cattle. She was renowned for her love of all animals. There are many stories about her kindness towards stray dogs, starving dogs, foxes and boars.

My specialist subject area is Technology and Applied studies, specifically I teach Food Technology and Mandatory Technology. Food technology is taught in Years 9, 10, 11 and 12, and Mandatory Technology in Years 7 and 8.

Food Technology is an elective taught from Years 9 to 12. There is very little in the syllabus about animal welfare issues. However, in the preliminary course and HSC course, there are a range of topics that do actually lend themselves to the incorporation of humane education teaching. For example, topics related to food availability and food selection, provide the opportunity to discuss reasons why individuals chose the diet that they do, including vegetarian diets. The Year 12 topics, The Australian Food Industry and Food Manufacture, also provide an opportunity for the discussion of animal welfare and humane education issues.

Mandatory technology is a student centred subject area where students are able to design and create a final product using a variety of techniques and a range of different materials. These are called Design Projects. Students complete three Design Projects a year. There are opportunities to incorporate Humane Education into the Design Situation and Design Brief prescribed for the Project. For example, in one Project, students are asked to use a Design Process to design and construct an interesting, informative and fun board game that teaches players about endangered Australian wildlife and promotes the conservation of Australian species. In another project, students are asked to design and create a safe, practical and cosy home for a companion animal. Firstly, a student will analyse and research the Design Brief. The next stage requires that the student develop some design ideas.

The student can experiment with different materials and then create the final product. In another Project students are required to create a computer based final product, for example a website. In one recent such project, students were asked to design an on-line girls' magazine. Animals always feature on some the pages in that online magazine, whether it's the girls discussing their favourite animal, their pets, or an animal welfare issue.

Brigidine College also has an Animal Welfare group for students. The Brigidine Co-Curricular Activity handbook states:

“The Group promotes and practises care for all non-human animals. The members are interested in Australian and international animal welfare issues, as well as the care of their own companion animals. Students have the chance to appreciate the value of non-human animals, learn about many different animals, become involved in animal welfare campaigns, educate others about animal issues, and listen to guest speakers from animal welfare and rights organisations.”

In the early days of the group, our main focus was to discuss the animal related issues that were being covered in the media. We would also share our experiences with our companion animals. We were also involved in fundraising for different animal welfare organisations. The Brigidine Animal Welfare Group joined a number of animal welfare organisations and on occasion we would support animal welfare campaigns.

Today, each student in the Group is given a Humane Education study guide at the start of the year. After being with the Group a full term the student is given an Animal Welfare Group folder in which to store the study guide and worksheets. We still fundraise for various local and international animal organisations. Opportunities are always there for students to discuss their experiences and encounters with animals. Students are able to use a lot of ICT in the Animal Welfare Group for research and for the creation PowerPoint presentations, animal care booklets, etc.

We have found that guest speakers are invaluable. The Group really benefits from the expertise of people coming in and sharing with the students. Excursions are really important to the Animal Welfare Group. The Group has visited the Animal Welfare League both to learn about the work of the organisation and to deliver the efforts of our fundraising. The Brigidine World Animal Week has been held from the 24th to 28th February. During one of these events the Group hosted an Animal Welfare Expo where representatives from different organisations are invited to set up market stalls, talk to the girls and hand out animal welfare material.

Animal Shelters

When starting on a new topic, I usually look to the study guide. It's a Humane Society US publication but the fact that it is not an Australian resource is remedied by researching the topic in the Australian context for additional information. A booklet of worksheets was prepared for that topic.

One activity set for this topic is one where students have to try to re-home shelter animals. Students are given a description of various animals looking for new homes and a description

of individuals and families (and their circumstances) looking for a new companion. Students must match up each animal to a suitable family or an individual. Large posters of the various animals that were up for adoption also helped the students with this task and make it seem more realistic.

Australian Humane Educators Network

AHEN started because of a grant from Voiceless. The aim of the organisation is to provide networking opportunities for teachers interested in Humane Education. The website contains information about Humane Education theory and practice. It also has links to some examples of Humane Education teaching resources and links to other useful materials for teachers interested in the field.
