



Institute of Sathya Sai Education Australia

National Education Conference 2011

Building the national values capital by integrating state education with W.A.T.C.H.

Background

Let us first look at the Sathya Sai U-turn Training School and the W.A.T.C.H. programme to see how it has evolved. Sathya Sai Baba introduced W.A.T.C.H. to the world at the inaugural function of workshops for teachers and field workers involved in the programme of Education in Human Values at Prasanthi Nilayam on 7-3-1986. In this he said *“I was then nine years old. I wrote a limerick on the wearers of the strange contraption and on the leather strip round their wrists. Now, the watch has become a part of every wrist. Only, the wearer has not learnt the message of the watch, its potential to arouse the latent divinity in man. The name, WATCH, has five letters! The mantra that leads one who is engaged in spiritual practice to God has five syllables. WATCH is as much a five-lettered mantra as Namah Sivaaya, and, if meditated upon, is as meaningful and momentous.”** From its inception the Sathya Sai U-turn Training School adopted W.A.T.C.H. as a method to communicate the five Human Values to students and community through innovative and exciting programmes that are practical and demonstrate the meaning of watching our Words, Actions, Thoughts, Character and Heart.

History

The W.A.T.C.H. programme was introduced by Sai members from the Cooran/Gympie area to the community as an after school programme, then as a “one day off site” support programme in two separate locations for male and female high school students who were “at risk” at school and as an “in school” class programme for grade 7 primary students. We developed new programmes, managed student changes, school requirements, changed locations and lesson plans enabling us to understand the flexibility of the W.A.T.C.H. concept.

The various W.A.T.C.H. programmes have now been operating for ten years and in that time we have enrolled 214 students and 51 adult volunteers. The feedback from students, participating schools and parents is excellent and we have many requests from other state schools for the programme. Unfortunately this year we have not operated a programme due to ill health and personal circumstances.

Our programmes operated during school hours and range from five hours once a week during each school term and 6 lessons of 1½ hours. In each case change in student behavior, teacher

contact and parent feedback was positive and remarkable. This clearly indicated that the W.A.T.C.H. programme worked and the varying lesson plan time frames can be changed provided the message is not diluted, meets school requirements, is professionally presented, is relative to student ages and is of the highest moral value, exciting and fun for everyone involved.

Issues.

Why is there difficulty in introducing the 5 Human Values as an education programme into State Education? Our experience has shown that State educators mainly principals have difficulty in understanding the concept of the Five Human Values and separating them from religion. When these are linked with other values programmes available to schools which do have departmental approval the task becomes even more difficult. When time constraints and lesson outcomes are measured against the school or teachers by parents and government the possibility for additional programmes in the school curriculum becomes overwhelming. Initially we found that most teachers are generally unwilling to attend or be part of a new programme due to their workload. For this reason it is extremely difficult to even get a meeting to put forward the concept.

We realized that principals often have student programmes presented to them for inclusion into their school and unless it is exciting, innovative, professionally presented, demonstrates educational benefits or can improve students wellbeing in the playground then they are not interested.

So what is different?

The W.A.T.C.H. programme is presented as a solution to an issue that is happening at the school. The programme can be adjusted to meet the constraints of the target group, completely flexible in application and presentation, is easy to understand, non-threatening, is fun and exciting. Principals, teachers, parents see positive results during lessons and when students return home. From our perspective the W.A.T.C.H. mantra is played out through the lesson plan with the Five Human Values at the core of each segment of the lesson. The teaching techniques remain the same regardless of how the programme content is presented to students. It is simple to write lesson plans and include issues that meet the schools needs and at the end we know that it works. As a focus we used “leadership” as the programme’s goal and all the values, lesson plans support this concept.

The principal, teachers and parents were happy, students were keen to understand, learn and be part of W.A.T.C.H. and by the end of the programme the whole school knew about the programme and was actively practicing the values.

All of our programmes have been presented and supported by a team of volunteers from within and outside the organization. Training of volunteers to reach a high standard of

presentation can happen in a very short period, mostly during weekly lessons as students understand that everyone in the class room is participating in the W.A.T.C.H. programme and older people have to learn to.

What can we do?

From its inception ten years ago the W.A.T.C.H. programme has been guided by a very small number of people who are supported by a group of dedicated volunteers who see the results at each lesson and are inspired to continue. If we are to build national values capital with W.A.T.C.H. then we need to recognize people in the Sai organization who live the values, motivate and inspire others. These people need to be encouraged to step forward. Being an example of the values that we are presenting is essential because when we are living examples it is easier for others to understand the values and then we are able to inspire others to be involved in programmes. Teachers and members within the Sai organization need to be part of this movement and take this leadership role or form support teams around their leaders so that programmes can be delivered to their local community. Always find the right person for the task. Our diversity is our strength. Teachers know their school community and their issues. What is required is Love, faith, inspiration, innovation and intellect.

We established that there is always a need for moral values in a school and there is always a human values solution, how it is initiated into a school programme is the issue. W.A.T.C.H. can find a pathway to a solution because it is simple. Programmes can expand into other schools by building on the success of what has already been achieved over the last ten years. Sai has told us many times “expansion is my name”. Our responsibility is to be his ambassadors, teachers, students and motivators and be living examples of his teachings.

The Institute of Sathya Sai Education can provide the support and guidance in all aspects of Sai education. However, it is up to us as individuals to take the first step and work together with the Institute for this common goal.

How we progress the W.A.T.C.H. programme into main stream education is up to all of us in the Sai organization and as our small group has shown W.A.T.C.H. can be applied to just about any school situation. We are our biggest stumbling block and we can only move forward when we as individuals take the first step and are united as one. The education system is not stopping values education WE ARE. Education fraternities are asking for programmes that will have a positive result to bullying at school and other social issues. We must remember that we are in competition for the students’ time and mind and with all the social media around today schooling can be challenging.

W.A.T.C.H. programmes are about Thoughts and Heart and in most cases this is a new experience for students. If one state school with 145 students can change their school room and playground behavior with a W.A.T.C.H programme then what can happen if the programme is introduced throughout the nation. History has shown innovative programmes can transform the national values capital in education; we just need to build on what we now have as a collective. Registered teachers from schools must be involved and supported by

volunteers or teachers aids who understand the programme. What we do know is that when school communities are introduced to W.A.T.C.H. and everyone in that community sees the results more requests for the programme arise. Values education cannot expand without YOU taking the first step.

Doug Bettens

** Sathya Sai Speaks ~ XIX – Page 22*