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## ACTIVITY 6.1 – Visioning and Action Planning

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### Introduction

Visioning is a process where students are helped to imagine how they would like their community to be in the future. The technique can help them to solve the issues they face and envision solutions. With a positive image of where the students want to go, it is easier to plan how to get there. Strategies can have a different outlook, with an emphasis on the directions they would **prefer** to go. You may like to try this activity outside, preferably somewhere quiet or perhaps near your local waterway.

Explain the process to the students before proceeding.

**Estimated Time: 40 minutes for visioning (suitable for outdoor setting), 1 hour for planning**

### HSIE Stage 5A3 Outcomes

**5.2** Analyses, synthesises and organises geographical information

**5.3** Selects and uses written, oral and graphic forms to communicate geographical information

**5.9** Applies geographical knowledge, understanding and skills to demonstrate active and informed citizenship

There are also links to  
Stage 5A2 Changing Australian Environments (5.2, 5.3, 5.9)  
Stage 6 - 8.2.1 Biophysical Interactions (P3, P12)

### Keywords

• action plan      • vision      • strategy

### Background to ‘Visioning’

Visioning is about ‘creative dreaming’ – building a picture based on hopes and dreams. It involves students in developing a picture of how they would like things to be in the future. It is a way of enhancing the positive actions being taken by the students, by enabling them to develop a ‘picture in their mind’ of what

they want to achieve in the long term – of how they would really like things to be. It is essentially a creative experience that can generate a new way of looking at a situation.

The visioning process described in Activity 6.1 draws on relaxation techniques. Many teachers have used these techniques in classroom situation with great results. However there are a few guidelines to keep in mind that will enhance the positive effects of the activity.

### The Setting

It is best if the exercise is done in a quiet setting. As this technique is focusing on the environment, an outdoor setting is suitable. The space needs to be large enough for students to be able to spread out and get comfortable. They can either sit on a chair, on the ground or stretch out on their backs on a rug on the ground.

### The Facilitator

The voice of the leader is probably the most important factor in successfully guiding a group relaxation. The voice should flow smoothly, at a lower and softer tone than normal. (But still able to be heard by all the group.) Directions need long pauses between them, to allow the group to experience the situation as it is guided.

### The Process

The process of envisioning involves several components, which need to be followed in sequence.

*Lead-in:* The process begins by tuning into the environment. By actively listening to one sound, then leaving it and moving to another, these sounds become familiar and are less likely to be intrusive during the meditation. Another way is to have participants see themselves in their mind's eye, in the setting, in that position and aware of what they are touching.

*Body Relaxation:* To help the mind to open and flow freely, it is important to begin with a body relaxation. This may involve conscious

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focusing and relaxing of different muscle groups or imagining light entering into different parts of the body to relax it.

*Visioning Process:* To help the mind to focus, the facilitator takes the group through a process of imagining the scene in their mind's eye.

*Allowing:* Once an image is developed it is important to allow the process to 'just happen': This involves having a passive mental attitude of allowing the images to unfold at their own pace and in their own way. (That is not to judge the experience as good or bad.) It is also important that the person gently bring himself or herself back to the process if they become distracted by 'current worries' or outside noises.

*Lead-out:* It is important to slowly bring participants back to their original alert state. Participants can sometimes be surprised at the

depth of their meditation and need a guided process to reorient. Instructions for the lead-out should be slightly louder and clear cut, but allow time for participants to come back to the room at their own pace, remember where they are and have a stretch before opening their eyes (see script).

*Sharing Visions:* At the end of the visioning exercise it is important for each person to get a chance to talk about the changes or improvements they would like to see. Ask students to turn to the person next to them, and talk about how they would like their community to be in 30 years time. After everyone has had time to talk, invite people to describe what they would like to see happen to the rest of the group.

*Relating Visions Back to Issues:* Finally ask the group to relate the visions they have for their community back to the original issues they have identified.

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## Visioning Process

What are some of the things that you are concerned about:

- in your local area?
- in the wider world?

We will now go on to plan what **we can do**. We will begin by developing a vision for the future.

**Visioning is a process to help you to imagine how you want the future to be. It means imagining what you really want and letting your mind dwell on its most noble and uplifting thoughts.**

*(Teacher/facilitator to read the script very slowly to the students, pausing for a few seconds at the dots.)*

Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down...Check that your back is straight and your legs are not crossed.....and your hands are resting in your lap or at your side with the palms up. .... Gently close your eyes...take your attention to the whole of your body resting on the earth...totally supported by the earth...feel the soft grass beneath you...feel the warmth of the sun on your body...feel the connections you have with the earth...your life support system...picture yourself lying here on the grass, just breathing...taking in life giving oxygen from the trees to renew and refresh your body...breathing out carbon dioxide that returns to the trees...feel with each breath your interdependence with your life support system ...one earth...one life...focus on your breath...listen to the sound of your own breathing...listen to the sound of your own breathing....as you breathe in...and breathe out...breathe in...and breathe out...spend a few moments with your awareness... just on the sound of your own breath .....(long pause).

Allow an image to come to your mind of your local river or creek...The time is about 30 years from now.....The work that you began has been successful.....The water is now cleaner.....Imagine yourself going down to the waters edge...What can you see?....Just allow whatever images come, to come....Is there anyone there with you ? ...Allow an image to come to your mind....What is the water like? ...What are the banks like?...(pause)...What sounds can you hear?....Are there any birds?...(pause)... What are the smells like?...(pause)... Just spend a few moments appreciating the beauty of this place...What does it feel like to be there?...You may like to go and sit next to the water...or lie down on the bank...Just spend sometime enjoying this place.....(long pause).

As you are sitting there, a small child, about 9 years old comes up to you, and asks you what you are doing...You tell the child, explaining what the water used to be like 30 years ago...(pause)...And the child says "Was it really? ...How did it come to get better? ....What did you do ?"....And so you talk to the child about what you and other people have done to care for the water...(pause) ...Just allow whatever thoughts come to you to come ...(pause) ...You talk about the things that have made a difference...Listen carefully to your own words.....(long pause).

When you have finished speaking to the child, say thankyou and farewell...(pause)...look around again at this beautiful scene. Take a moment to place the image in your heart .....gently hold that image in your heart.....It will be your guide for action in the times to come.

When you are ready, gently leave that scene and return to now...return to the sound of your own breathing as you breathe in...and breathe out...breathe in...and breathe out...(pause)...listen to the sounds you can hear around you ...(pause)...bring your attention gently back to where you are, gently supported by the earth...see yourself sitting or lying here with your friends...slowly, slowly start to move your fingers...give your toes a wiggle and your fingers a wiggle...have a stretch...and when you are ready open your eyes and sit up.

Stay there quietly for a few moments just enjoying the calm.

Turn to the person next to you, and talk about what you have experienced.

### Discussion

1. Have students speak to the person next to them about their vision (allow about 5 minutes).
2. Ask for some volunteers to describe what they “saw”. (Note some students may not ‘see’ anything – others may have a clear picture to describe.

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**Some examples of students' comments following this activity:**

*I could see all the trees we have been planting, but they were big and the place was beautiful. I feel really encouraged to keep going.*

*I went down to the water and dangled my feet in. It was so clear. I could see some fish swimming.*

3. Have students write down some words to describe their visions and/or have them draw a picture.

## Developing an Action Plan

Use the following strategic questions to help students develop an action plan.

**Step 1:** Have students think quietly about the strategic questions below and to note down their own responses.

**Step 2:** Divide the class into small groups of 6-8 students to discuss their responses to the questions.

**Step 3:** As a whole class, develop a list of priority issues by brainstorming responses to questions 1 onto a large sheet of paper.

**Step 4:** Decide on the order of priority for the issues you have identified- students could vote for their top 2 by raising their hands. Alternatively give each student 4 stick-on stars to vote with. Students can then place a star against the issues they consider most important (or place all 4 stars on one issue if they consider it the most important). Enter the top priority issues on Table 6.1.

**Step 5:** Discuss the root causes of these top priority issues – for example, if litter is entering stormwater, what are the causes of this? Record causes on Table 6.1.

**Step 6:** Brainstorm strategies for action to address the causes of issues identified in step 4.

**Step 7:** Decide on the top priority ideas for action that the class can undertake by voting (as in step 4) – or ask individual students or small groups to decide on their own priority action. Add these strategies to the Action Plan on Table 6.1.

**Step 8:** Work out the actions that are needed to implement these strategies:

- Who do you need to speak to?
- What are the steps we need to take?
- Who is responsible for completing each strategy?
- When will they be completed by?

**Step 9:** Write up the action plan on Table 6.1

**Step 10:** Implement plan

**Step 11:** Report back – Consider how to report on your action plan to the school, your parents and the local community (including local government).

## Strategic Questions

1. What are the major issues that are impacting in the state of our local creek/river? (*Consider the results of your water testing as well as home, school and community surveys.*)
2. How do you feel about the state of the local creek?
3. How would you like the creek to be?
4. How do you think this can happen? (*List any ideas for action you have. Share your ideas with the rest of the class, then choose one or two strategies to begin with.*)
5. What are you prepared to do? (*From your list of strategies decide on one strategy you will actually work on and think about what you are prepared to do – for example are you prepared to work one afternoon after school each week on your project.*)

**How can we work together with other members of our school, our parents and our local community to do this?**



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## Example

Issue	Root Causes	Strategy	Actions	Responsibility	Date
1. Litter in school playground is blowing into the drains.	1. Too much packaging on school canteen lunches	Hold a student meeting to find out ways that students are prepared to address this problem.	• Arrange to meet with the Principal to seek permission to hold meeting.	• Steven and Nicole	• 4 March
	2. Not enough bins		• Attend Student Representative Council meeting to get their support.	• Jessica and Sean	• 8 March
	3. Students don't care about rubbish in the playground		• Set a suitable time and place for the meeting.	• Steven, Nicole, Jessica and Sean	• 10 March
			• Promote meeting to school	• Whole class	• 10-17 March
			• Facilitate meeting to find out student ideas	• Mr Smith	• 17 March
			• Report ideas for action to the principal	• Steven and Nicole	• 18 March