Connect
supporting student participation

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• Connect on Facebook

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 Permit me to reminisce a little longer, as we approach Connect’s 200th issue. But such reminiscence should also serve to help us think forward: about what the next few years could bring. And that will, hopefully, be the theme for Connect 200.

It may seem presumptive to even think of predicting changes over the next 17 years to 2030 ... to Connect 300. If we go back 17 years, that takes us only to the mid 1990s - and for some of us, that’s not that far back. But for others reading this, that’s a literal lifetime.

Even earlier than that, Connect was looking forward: asking questions about how new technologies might affect student networking: whether it might make it easier, but might also devalue face-to-face experiences. I think we understand more about the possibilities and the pitfalls now. I can also reflect on the differences in the process of production of resources such as Connect, or the Ascolta school-based community newspaper that I worked on in the 1970s and 1980s. Here, 30 people (students, teachers, parents, community members) spent a weekend (10 times a year) laying out 40 to 60 pages of a tabloid newspaper, working in small groups, making each paste-up a considered and collective work of art. Now, it’s so much easier to do that layout in a desktop publishing program – but also much more ‘efficient’ to do it alone. The collective nature of the participation has changed. How has that affected our understanding and practice of participation?

The early years of the 70s and 80s as documented in Connect were, in many ways, years of optimism and change: student networking, cross-age tutoring programs, democratic alternative schools, students and media and so on. But 17 years ago, in the mid 1990s, we were in the middle of a decade of financial cutbacks, school closures and low educational morale. And student participatory initiatives were pushed out of focus.

What do we learn from all that, particularly as we again enter a period of economic cuts in education? What will be the impact on practices and initiatives in student participation, voice, engagement, representation, and so on. Are we in a better position to survive these attacks and constraints? How? What do we need to do?

So, while looking back at the lessons of the past (and we now have 33 years’ of Connects available on line to provide rich data), let’s look forward and try to set some goals and aspirations that might help us through tough times.

Here’s the challenge for the next issue of Connect:

I’m interested to project us forward 17 years, to Connect issue 300, at the start of 2030. I want us to write the articles now that we think will be featured in Connect then. I want us to not only describe an initiative or a practice, but also to mention critical points over the last 17 years that brought us there: challenges, advances, drivers etc. These can report a small and focused initiative, or take a larger scan and scope. They can be written from the point of view of a student, a teacher, a parent, a principal, a consultant, an academic ... The critical focus is: What is student participation, action, voice, engagement, involvement, representation etc like at the start of the year 2030?

This is an invitation to write for Connect 200 (April 2013) and to look forward ... to write the articles now that will be in Connect 300. All contributions welcome - and should be e-mailed to me at: r.holdsworth@unimelb.edu.au to arrive by the end of March.
The Reaching High Program was developed in 1992 at Nathalia Secondary College, in north central Victoria. On November 15-18th, 2012 it celebrated its 20th anniversary with an exhibition in Nathalia that traced its development and achievements.

Reaching High has been profiled in many issues of Connect over those 20 years, as a student participatory program that has catered to rural secondary students with learning differences. (See Connect 77-78, 82, 84, 148, 150 and 162) From its conception, it was delivered throughout the year as part of the school curriculum with a goal of the progressive development of an annual, three-day regional camp using a literacy-in-action approach. The camp brought in adult role models who have, or have had, learning differences, to act as mentors for the students, showing them possible pathways into the future. The program uses past student participants as leaders, adult role models and assistants.

In 2003, Reaching High Inc. was formed as a community organisation predominantly made up of young people with learning differences, working for students with learning differences.

The Reaching High Book
In 2006, Connect published a detailed account of the Reaching High Program in a 120 page book: Reaching High: A Program Promoting Positive Approaches to Learning Differences. In that publication, copies of which are available from Connect (see p X), Lyn Loger outlined the program and its conceptual themes:

“This book outlines a literacy program with a difference.

“In the Reaching High Program, students with learning differences organise annual literacy camps. They wrote a ‘how to’ manual to share their approaches with others. They set up a community organisation to continue their work. And now they’ve documented their experiences.

“Reaching High takes you on an exciting and inspirational journey that spans 14 years (now 20 years)...

“There are three conceptual themes that interweave throughout this book on the Reaching High Program.

The first, which underpins all that has been achieved, is about the principles of student participatory practice. This book documents fifteen years of student participatory practice that has come of age through its extension into adult civic action for young people with learning differences...

“The second theme is the logical consequence of the first, exploring and documenting the enabling of young people’s voices in serious educational discourse. Young people speak honestly, openly and equally to you as readers of this book. It is the start of an educational conversation seeking a response...

“The third theme is wellbeing and its connection to the creation of meaning. Young people learn through this program that it is possible to transform their learning differences into gifts to provide learning pathways to others. How? By ‘hands supporting each other’, the students’ chosen motto. A fundamental understanding is that meaning and meaningful action come from positively connecting to each other; this program is built on the premise that these should be neither time nor venue boundaried.

“The Reaching High Program has been an intrepid pioneer in this broader conceptual terrain. It has made use of cross sectoral development as guide ropes for mapping out new educational pathways and it has now built Reaching High Inc. (2003) as a non-profit, community organisation that connects back to support its student base...

“Senge says that we must not ‘... confuse the maps for the territory.’ (Senge, 1994: 27) Here is a map of what we have done and a description of our educational territory.” (Lyn Loger, 2006)
20 Year Exhibition

The GRAIN Store Community Gallery in Nathalia was packed with 45 people for the official opening of the Reaching High Display Poster exhibition on a Saturday afternoon in November 2012. Most of the crowd was made up of local community members who had supported the program. Here was a window of opportunity for Lyn Loger to publicly thank them for their generous support over the 20 years.

Andrew Skinner, President of Reaching High Inc., was MC and he carried out this role excellently, never missing a beat in his welcome to Mayor, Cr Brian Keenan, Cr Alex Monk and Cr Marie Martin. We were honoured to have Moira Shire Councillors join us in the celebration and delighted when Cr Kevin Bourke joined us a little later. We have received a lot of support from the Moira Shire over the years and this event is no exception, with a $500 grant just being awarded to us from the Flood Recovery and Community Resilience Grant Scheme.

We were privileged to have Auntie Rochelle Patten, Yorta Yorta Elder, provide the Welcome to Country. It was fitting that the exhibition was opened by Jennifer Hippisley, CEO of Goulburn Murray LLEN, and by Stuart Robins, Life Member of Reaching High Inc. Jennifer facilitated our first grant as Reaching High Inc. in 2004 and helped us navigate our way forward many times, while Stuart is the creator of the two logos and longest serving participant in the program. It was wonderful to have Gordon Dowell, Community Artist, join us from Newstead and to have Danica Rosa, from Porepunkah, cater for us.

After 20 years, what is there that lives on? The program has achieved a body of work: a Community of Voices; the voices of ten older adult role models with learning differences who had passed on their messages of never giving up until they had achieved their goals, to our student participants in the program. One of them, Michael Marquet from NZ, donated three of his books, Illiteracy to Millionaire (2010). Michael is still involved in the recovery process after the Christchurch earthquakes and could not join us. A copy was provided to John Sciacca, Principal of Nathalia Secondary College, because NSC has always been the lead school in the program. Ten past students had their display posters featured, with each demonstrating how the mentoring had inspired them to take on leadership roles, Reaching High to achieve their goals.

Comments such as ‘inspiring’, ‘thought provoking,’ simply wonderful – I was uplifted by this exhibition’ provided heart warming encouragement to the young people whose posters were displayed. It is hoped that other towns will want to view this exhibition – it has been designed as a Poster Display exactly for this purpose.

We thank NADDCO for auspicing this event.

Lyn Loger
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I wanted to take the opportunity of being here at Australia to bring together some of the people I’ve always wanted to meet related to student voice in Australia. There’s so much exciting work happening in this field here that I wanted to personally meet all these people and also I thought that this conference would really benefit from having a conversation with these fabulous folks.

I have some definitional issues to start with - some initial conceptualisations of what it is we’re talking about. This field has a lot of good words; internationally the most common phrase used is ‘child participation’ and that’s because those are the words that are used in the United Declaration of Rights of a Child, Article 12: which says that children have a series of rights afforded to them including access to information, expression of use and freedom to form collective organisations. All nations in the United Nations have ratified this treaty except for the United States and Somalia. This participation framework frames a lot of the work happening internationally and creates a structure for governments to do this kind of work.

In the United States we tend to use the word ‘voice’ or ‘student voice’ to frame the work that we’re doing. Part of that is to create spaces for children to have a voice in local decisions. ‘Voice’ research also can have the flavor of youth leadership research in some fields. In high school, students form groups to have a say in their own schools and elsewhere. The term ‘consultation’ is used in a lot of research, in particular that around classroom-based interactions between adults and young people.

‘Partnership’ or ‘youth partnership’ is another word used in some of the literature to explain what kind of work we’re talking about here. All of these are ideas being young people and adults working together to achieve change.

In October 2012, Dana Mitra (Associate Professor at Penn State University, USA) convened a panel of academics, practitioners and students at the international Values and Ethics Conference in Brisbane, around the topic of ‘Student Voice.’ This provided an opportunity for some people working in this area to meet and share descriptions and thoughts about their work.

This article is an edited transcript of that panel.
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a leader in this field, is to serve aole of being a convener: bringing
people to this conference, but also
thinking of ways that we can have
our own spaces to share our work
in terms of journals, and our own
conferences.

We started a Facebook group a
couple of months ago that is a space
for practitioners and researchers
to show and share their work; it’s
called Student Voice Research and
Practice. Anyone who would like to
learn more about what’s going on,
can just go to that page and join.

It’s been exciting that it’s kind
of gone almost viral. There’s an
amazing amount of information that
people all over the world have been
putting in the Facebook group: as a
repository of links and papers and
emails. It’s very, very vibrant and I’m
very excited by it.

Our panelists here include
former teachers and current
teachers, former and current
principals, folks at the university,
and a high school student. They
will share their experiences, the
work they’re currently doing and
what they’ve done in the past.

Here are some guiding
questions we wanted to talk about:
How does student voice define
ethical leadership? What knowledge,
findings, outcomes, possibilities
emerge from voice work? Are
there any resistances, surprising or
diverging reactions to the opening
of student voice that surprised or
irritate us? What dilemmas most
need attention related to the
processes of making student voice
work: such as how adults know how
to work with students and how to
make things work; how do we
change power relationships? What
is the relationship between levels of
student voice?

Voice occurs in different spaces.
People here work within schools, at
the statewide level, across schools
and within governments. What is
the future of student voice? Where
is the growing edge? Where do we
go as a field? What questions are
we feeling like we need answers to
right now? What research needs to
be conducted?

We’ll start by having each of
our panelists introduce themselves
and say whatever it is that’s burning
in their hearts on these issues.

Kaye Johnson

I come to you as a primary school
person, firstly as a school teacher and a
preschool teacher. I’m currently working
in the Department of Education in South
Australia as part of the education charter
to raise school leaders.

The work I’d like to
talk with you about comes
from my experience
in primary schools. I’m
absolutely passionate
about the ability
of young students to have
say about their school:
what happens in it, how
to make it fair and how
they can contribute.

One of the concerns I
have is that often student
voice work employs very
formal methods, such
as formal meetings and
formal structures to hear
from students. My work
has been about engaging
as many primary school kids at one
time in having a say about their school.

Student voice changes leadership
by demanding of the leader some
personal answers to some very key
questions. For example, as the leader
of a small new primary school, I had to be
very clear about reasons I was asking for
those 5 to 12 year olds to have a say in
their school.

Later, as the leader of a larger school
of 600 students – a very traditional 150
year old school – I also had to be really
clear about why was it that I was asking
all students to have a say. The reasons
we ask determines what we ask; they
determine which children we ask, how
we ask students and especially they inform what is done with what the
students tell us: what the kids say. Why
are we doing it?

As a leader I need to be really
clear about my motivations. From
the very beginning, one of my motivations
was that, even with the very best of
intentions, even in the most caring
environments, what we’ve done in
schools is to position kids as vulnerable,
as dependent and largely incompetent.

My reasons for asking children from
to twelve firstly relates to children’s
rights. I think children do have a right to
have a say in the place in which they are
for so much of their lives. They spend
more time with us than they do in their
homes. (Let’s hope they’re awake for all
of the time they’re at school.) I think in
primary schools we’ve been especially
good at making sure children’s rights
of provision and protection are well
addressed, but I reckon their rights to
participation have been overlooked.

The second motivation is about
school reform. Sometimes we’ve asked
for information from children to gather
the kind of data we need to bring about
some changes. The third
motivation is about
distributed leadership.
The fourth motivation
is about students and
citizenship. All children
are part of society, and
need to practise those
processes of citizenship
– not just a select few.
My final motivation is
that we need new ways
of doing school with our
kids.

My passions are
about enabling all
children to have lots of
say in their school and
to be really clear about
the relationship between
the leader and the teachers and why we
ask kids.

Lynne Searle

I’m the principal of Gosford High School,
an academically selective school on the
central coast of New South Wales with
approximately 1,100 students. I’ve been
there six years.

When I started, I started with a
commitment to student voice and in
particular to student leadership. I believe
every student has the capacity to be a
leader. We have defined leadership at my
school in terms of vision, empowerment
and influence and we believe that every
student can be a leader. Throughout this
last six years we developed programs
for leadership in each year, so that every
student has the capacity to be involved
in the leadership program in a cohesive,
sustained and developmental way every
year as they go through school.

As a school, we are committed to
developing and nurturing the whole child.
We are academically selective and almost
all our students go to the university; we
all have very high expectations. But whilst
we are committed to achieving high
examination results, we also provide a
rich co-curricular program that supports
the Arts, sport, service and personal
development.

The idea of the hidden curriculum
is critical to students’ success lifelong.
Students need opportunities to foster
and develop the essential skills that
they’re going to take with them into their
personal and professional lives, and it is incumbent on schools to provide and nurture the development of these. Long after the glory (or not) of academic results have faded, the capacities to problem solve, work creatively, think critically, collaborate and communicate retain their value.

The other really important element for me is that school is something we do with students – it’s not something we do to them. To work with students in realising and developing their best potential is really important.

What do we do? We have significant leadership programs in each year that have been remarkable successful in the development of a culture of community and celebration. However, despite the fact that we get fabulous academic results, despite the fact that we’ve got leadership programs in every year, and students have the opportunity to develop and run programs, to initiate, innovate, there was still something missing.

What was missing was a structure whereby every single student in the school had a place to belong, where one person in the school, one adult in the school, had a responsibility for every particular child. That has led to a program that we’ve called the Homegroup Program, based on research that I was fortunate enough to see with a fellowship to go to England.

The thing that I found in common there, in all of the successful schools that had strong student voice initiatives, was a form of tutoring. That meant that there was one person in the school who had a really deep understanding of every individual child, which gave them a sense of belonging.

I brought that idea back to my school and suggested it. They thought that it sounded like a really fantastic idea. I then handed the development of that program over to teachers and to students. We mapped a program where students meet in groups of about 20 to 24, across Years 7 to 12, with a teacher and Year 11 lead learner and a Year 10 junior lead learner. Throughout the year, groups meet for 20 minutes three times a week. The leadership component of that – the leading learning – is really having a profound impact on the school.

Initially the development of relationships was very strong. It’s moved on into peer tutoring and expanded out of home groups into the whole school. For instance, at the moment we have over 100 students participating in mathematics tutoring at lunch times: that’s 100 tutors and 100 tutees. We have tutoring also in physics, chemistry and English.

This has been about creating a sense of belonging for students. Belonging is one of the most important elements for student participation in schools and the success of the program is reflected in the ownership students have taken of its content and its structure. They write the program – it belongs to them. They deliver it, with the support of their home group teacher who then has the time to work individually with every child in their group.

Eve Mayes
I came into student voice through my involvement as a teacher researcher and involvement in a teacher research project at the University of Western Sydney.

In 2009, our school had funding for school reform. We decided that we would approach the reform processes through a bottom-up approach involving the students even though, in some way, that jarred quite significantly with the dominant culture of the school.

I think the struggle around ‘deficit messages’ and then shifting toward ‘engaging voice messages’ has been challenging. This is last year of that process. I’m a doctorate student, going back to the school next year in my fieldwork to evaluate and explore the student complexities. I’m particularly interested in some of the challenges and tensions and contradictions and paradoxes in student voice work.

I want to share stories related to that. I feel very vulnerable in doing this because it exposes my facilitating work with students as a teacher, working with other staff, some of my mistakes and some of the difficulties of this process. I am fundamentally hopeful about the potential for student voice for radical shifts in what individuals do in schools. Clearly we need to advocate for the power of student voice. This is a setting where we can explore some of the complexities.

My stories are particularly about students at the margins of student voice initiatives who were recruited and embraced and encouraged for whatever reason or other students who chose consciously or unconsciously to leave those initiatives. That’s what I’m interested in exploring.

The story I want to tell is about a student who was ‘at risk’. (I don’t like that term but I use it to highlight some of those things.) We were deliberately working with Year 9 students in particular for the last three years. We were sort of getting a representative group of students to be trained in research about forms of teaching and learning, to develop their own research questions, to conduct their research, to analyse their data, to disseminate their findings to staff and to have an audience. It was a very kind of tricky thing that we doing: we were very conscious of trying to recruit and then explore the characteristics of the group: is this group genuinely representative of all classes, all groups of friends, all at different levels?
We had group of students who were ‘at risk’ students who would muck around. They were very open about the fact they enjoyed this group for free food, to ‘get us out of class’ and those sorts of motives.

Eric (‘I’ll use a pseudonym) was resistant at first. But then we had a day where another school’s students who were doing similar work came to our school as representatives. There was a research day where they talked about what we actually do.

At the beginning of the day, the bus from the other school was running late, and Eric was the one saying: ‘no we shouldn’t have breakfast; we should wait for them’. At the end of the day, after all the activities that we’d done, without any prompting, he decided to give a speech thanking these students from this other school which was a private girls’ school. He was so articulate and so amazing that people cried. It was really beautiful. News of this spread around the school and the teachers were so impressed with the principal, so impressed about Eric. He did great stuff in the media, and finished up uniting the group.

I think there were some interesting other reactions of staff: that he was performing, just doing it for the girls, or doing it to show off. That raises some interesting issues and I’ve been reflecting on these issues and some of these stories as I’ve been living the last year in Pennsylvania.

The assumption is that, when students are involved in ‘voice work’, they’re tending to be consistent in their adoption of their new identity. If they change, we have great hopes that student voice will do some great things for communities, for the school, for students individually. We assume they need to consistently maintain that identity, which obviously is quite simplistic and problematic. It raises some issues about us grabbing quotes from kids at the end of our two weeks with them, saying: ‘this is the most amazing thing for my confidence’. This might be a meaningful narrative but it doesn’t necessarily show some of the complexities.

I’m interested to explore some of those ways that students might use student voice activities as a way of trying out new subjectivities – which they may choose to then adopt or reject – how difficult it might be for students to adopt a new identity. It might be quite in conflict with the previous ‘identity’ they had.

**Samantha McClelland**

I’m a high school student in Victoria, where I have done a lot of work with our school’s SRC. About halfway through last year I got involved with an organisation called the VicSRC: the Victorian Student Representative Council. That’s a network of SRCs from throughout Victoria who have formed a peer-led body of student voice in Victoria. We represent all sectors: government schools as well as the Catholics and independents. We’re an independent body that serves as the peak body of student voice in Victoria. We represent the students and also empower them in their endeavours: starting initiatives within their school and also just getting heard if they haven’t been able to do that otherwise.

While we are an independent body, we get funding from the Victorian government and that goes towards funding a coordinator, who is not a student but helps run the operational side of the organisation. We are also auspiced by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria.

We try to empower students to take action about their own learning and in their own school environments. A lot of people think they are acting in the best interests of students, whereas students can be stakeholders in their own education. We need opportunities to change things within our school, whether through that student’s SRC school or by an organisation such as us.

Our process at the VicSRC is that an annual student Congress is held in August each year over a weekend at a campsite. It brings together about 100 students from throughout Victoria who have been either nominated by their schools or applied to go directly; generally they get their school involved in the VicSRC and then attend the Congress.

At the beginning of the Congress they have to think about issues that are relevant to them in their own schools. From there they develop proposals; we hold a formal Congress session in which these proposals are discussed and some are passed. Then these become the work of the student Executive for the next year.

The student Executive is trying it’s best to be representative of the entire student population in Victoria. We try to carry that through throughout our operations.

The student Executive is also elected at Congress. That is the body that I have served on. It has to be accountable to other students in Victoria. It is 15 students across Years 7 to 12, and a very diverse group. People take on different roles within that group in order to help with the operation of the organisation and with implementing the resolutions that are passed.

Within this Executive we are allocated portfolios. One of the ones I worked on was ‘talking to the government’. We went to sessions like the Federal Productivity Commission round table about the schooling work force. We’ve also been part of stakeholder consultations with the Victorian Auditor General’s Office about Maths and Science Teaching in schools, and have given feedback on a lot of other policies as well.

I also coordinated the SRC Recognition Awards, where we gathered students’ proposals from all over Victoria and gave awards to those who demonstrated best practice.

The Government has also given us money to create a resource kit called Represent!, three copies of which were distributed to every secondary school throughout Victoria. This gives information about how students can go about setting up their own SRC within their school, and is a guide for teachers and students to work together to create their own systems within their school to enable student representation.
We have a quarterly student newsletter, talking about some of the things that we have been up to and how the resolutions are going. We hold about 12 regional conferences throughout Victoria each year so we can get contact with the students who we are trying to represent, and communicate about things like our resources.

We have worked on resolutions like a 'teach the teacher' program this year. This has actually been about students involved in leading professional development. We are developing a resource to send to schools so they can learn how to do their own 'teach the teacher' program. The pilots that we have done in two schools have worked really well.

There are some other areas we are working on like students on School Councils and students on teacher selection panels. These are all reported on in our progress reports.

Roger Holdsworth

I retired from research at The University of Melbourne at the end of 2004. My background is as a physics and mathematics teacher, but at various stages I’ve been involved in some really different and interesting initiatives around the areas of student voice. ‘Student participation’ is more the language that resonates with me. In fact just recently I was saying to students in a New South Wales conference that I don’t believe in student voice: if you just have a voice and nothing happens with it, I don’t want to be supporting of that. I want to see you make actual decisions, as partners school decision-making. This might also challenge students.

I started publishing a magazine called Connect in 1979, to share ideas about these sorts of approaches. It’s a practice journal about sharing initiatives. Initially it came out of my own work as a teacher: for example, a cross-age tutoring program in my school.

In this program I would pay students to teach other students in the school. I was actually paying students to teach in subjects in which they were failing. If you were failing maths, for example, I paid you to teach maths to a younger student. We also ran the five-language newspaper community newspaper with our students for ten years, then student-made community radio programs, and later we started developing student-made TV programs (which were involved with the start of community TV in Victoria) and broadcast these student programs back into parent’s homes.

All of these initiatives can be seen to be about student voice, but also about student roles within their communities. Connect has documented a range of things like that, every two months since late 1979.

Most recently my preoccupation has been with a model called Student Action Teams, which is very much like students as researchers. David will talk about the RuMAD Program and it and Student Action Teams were developed side by side in Victoria with support from the Education Department without knowing that each other existed. We developed precisely the same sort of philosophical framework.

In the Student Action Teams approach, students in primary and secondary schools work on an issue either in their broader community or in their school community that they care about. They do deep research about this issue for a period of time – eg six months or three years. Instead of simply giving views off the top of their head – “what I think as a young person” – they interview and research and find out other young persons’ perspectives and study the issue deeply.

From this research, they come up with action proposals about the way that the world should be and then try to implement and act upon those proposals. Student Action Teams have been around things like community safety, traffic safety in the local area, environment, police relations and so on.

They can also be about internal school topics like engagement: with grade four, five and six students from schools working on “what does it mean to be engaged?” Initially they were saying things like: being engaged is what you do before you get married. So we talked about ‘school engagement’: it doesn’t mean you get married to the school. They puzzled through that, and talked about being ‘switched on or switched off’. In this way, we had teams of disengaged and engaged students working together to investigate what engagement means. Finally, hey published information from their research in a cartoon book for teachers about engagement.

We've been working around a series of those approaches. More recently, they have become about a way of changing teacher methodology so this becomes a normal way for working with students, of teaching that focuses on productive work within the classroom.

Recently I’ve started working in Victoria within a program involving 53 schools with National Partnerships funding around the development of improved teaching and learning. Three of those schools are working around ‘student voice’ and teacher development. One of those schools is a special developmental school, working with students with IQs less than 55. They are committed to student voice, but want to investigate how we convince staff that these students have real, authentic voices that are valued.

The question that now concerns me is this: it’s all very well to work with those teachers who are enthusiastic, who share in a culture about this, but if we are talking about change at the system level, what’s our ‘theory of change’ that can bring about changes in the way that teachers respond and react to student voice. Those are some of my broad preoccupations and worries at the moment.

February 2013
David Zyngier

In a previous life I was a high school teacher and principal, now an academic. I start from the premise that great schools are not made great by great teacher performances but by great student performances. I’ll very quickly spell out some of the research and developmental projects that I’ve been involved with for the last decade or so.

The first one is the RuMaD or Are You Making a Difference Program, which Roger mentioned, which we developed unrelatedly with the Student Action Teams. The program is available at www.ruMAD.org.au and is free and open to all the world to go and use. It’s a social justice through community student related action program, that is cross-curricula and is not asking the teachers to do more, but to actually do less: to allow the students to lead through curriculum work focused on their own action and their own concerns.

Leading out of that, I did some work on listening to what school kids actually want and that is a wonderful video called: What School Kids Want. It is not really widely available any more, but if anyone wants it, they can ask me for it. I did some research listening to students who have dropped out or been pushed out of school: young adolescents around the ages of 14 or 15, listening to them about their stories, about their explanations as to why they are no longer in school. It was very different stories to the ones that the schools were publishing about why their students were not in schools.

I then did a Ph.D. thesis called ‘Engaging Pedagogies and Pedagogues’. I asked school students what works for them: what should their teachers be doing to get them actively, authentically engaged in their learning.

Currently I’m involved in three different programs. One is an enhanced learning program, an after school program where underachieving children from disadvantaged communities work together with both academic mentors from the university and community mentors from various institutions. They tell the adults what they want and the adults need to facilitate that kind of learning program for them in an after school program. We are using high school mentors as well who facilitate and lead that process, together with the adults.

At a university level I’m still involved in listening to the students: I had a project called ‘What Students Talk About When the Professor’s Not Listening’. At the end of each year, with student permission, I gather the Facebook comments that the students are making. Each year they set up a Facebook website and, once their grades are in, they’re happy to share those comments with their professor. That makes for very good learning and professional development for us.

Finally I’ve got an ongoing project that leads us to my teacher research project, where I’m following new graduate teachers into the field and they talk about their needs and support each other. Again still listening to the voices from the field.

Discussion

Dana Mitra

What are the outcomes related to this work? This type of change happens in multiple layers. You see changes in the young people themselves who are participating in this work: it changes their sense of agency, their sense of belonging in the school, all sorts of skills and competencies, and their ability to engage in dialogue. These are individual transformations that we see in young people and in adults as well.

Then there are classroom and school-wide changes: policies changing, cultures of schools changing, reform trajectories changing. Simply by asking students what’s wrong with the school and how to fix it: amazing things come out of that because they know better than anyone what’s wrong.

Thirdly, there are broader system-wide changes: networks working more broadly outside schools, in communities and cultures and things like that. Included in this are teacher training programs related to student voice efforts.

I’d like to start by asking the panel to think of one example, one story, one decision, or one initiative that was particularly powerful to you.

David Zyngier

In the RuMaD program (Are you Making a Difference Program), the challenge was taken up by a very small school in northeastern Victoria – a 32 student school. The children travel for up to an hour to go there; it’s a one and a half full-time teacher school.

In 2001, these children were really concerned about the proliferation of plastic bags in their environment. So through this program, the children, with a very enthusiastic principal, asked the question: What would the ideal world look like? They envisioned one without plastic bags proliferating and polluting the environment.

They then decided they would do something about it in their own local community. The children, from the age of six to twelve, went to the regional centre and, with their clip boards, surveyed shoppers. They asked: “If you had an alternative to plastic bags, would you use it?” The shoppers all said yes.

The students went back to the school and decided to make bags. They tried to source them, including contacting some very important people in Australia. Dick Smith, a philanthropist and innovator,
helped the children to source locally made bags (from King Island, south of Adelaide).

The school then decorated them and sold them in the community. They eradicated plastic bags from a large country town in six months. This is a very powerful story: it began the green bag movement in Australia, and began the end of throw-away plastic bags from one small school. Never let it be said that children can't make a difference.

Kaye Johnson

From my experience, young children can make a real difference. The research project on which children at my school worked resulted in some changes in the way that school and its Governing Council viewed the children and their ideas. Previously they’d been quite happy to support children in terms of fundraising, support children in looking after their physical environment. They hadn’t been inclined to have the children come along to Governing Council meetings and watch the adults in action.

Part of the research required children to report to the Council four times in one year. Now I’m not sure whether it was the children’s great ideas, their absolute passion for the changes that they were going to promote in the school, or the fact that they were competent in the technology that really stunned the parents. But after that, the parents started to ask the students four times in one year. Now I’m not sure whether it was the children’s great ideas, their absolute passion for the changes that they were going to promote in the school, or the fact that they were competent in the technology that really stunned the parents. But after that, the parents started to ask the students four times in one year.

Lynne Searle

During last term, we put on a day of professional development for other schools in the selective schools’ network. We invited schools – principals and teachers – to come along and look closely at what it was we were doing.

I gave a very brief overview of the history of leadership development for students in the school and then we handed the day to the students. The next session was run by the student leadership team, who went through the initiatives that had been put in place. They showed them the Facebook page that they use for communication with students: they have a GHS meeting page where they post all the videos done in school, including a short film festival that we have.

They then looked at the new Hunger program that we’ve developed; we had the lead learners from that. We had two Year 11 and two Year 10 lead learners who talked about what they did in the sessions and how they developed it. Then in the afternoon we had a panel of Year 7 and 8 students, like this panel, and the participants asked them questions about what it meant to them and about the opportunities they’ve had for leadership.

I said to the students: “Do you want us to get together so we can talk about your session?” They looked at me and they said: “Why do you want to do that?” It was their session, they were organising it and there was that confidence and that capacity. For me, the really big thing is the absolutely remarkable capacity development that you get within the school.

Eve Mayes

For me, it’s seeing some of the shifts in the ways that students think about school and also the dialogue between students. The students did some case studies and classroom observations. These students took on a different role: as a researcher rather than a student. You could visibly see the shift in attitude.

When students spoke to the teachers after their lessons, the students started telling the teacher about all the positive things that the students had said about the lesson and about that particular teacher’s teaching. The teacher was sitting at her desk and the students were standing up with laptops telling her. It was a really interesting role shift, but a beautiful kind of empathetic understanding, with students saying to this teacher: “You know it was really great how you did this; and we were really impressed by this about what you were doing.”

In some other cases, there was some dialogue with teachers explaining issues that they felt existed in that classroom and in the school, to which they wanted their students to pay attention: administrative pressures that were experienced at the same time as teaching. Afterwards, the students were talking and reflecting: “I never knew how hard it was to be a teacher; I never knew that they had to do all this planning before they came into the classroom.”

You move away from the binaries of ‘good teacher - bad teacher’ roles; students are ‘oppressed’ or they’re ‘happy’. You’re thinking about some of those complexities of the school environment and interactions that happen and about all the other things that are going on in students’ lives.
Samantha McClelland

I was talking to a few guys from an Islamic College who haven't actually established their own SRC at their school. Their school is relatively new. Just as they were leaving, I gave them a copy of Represent! and they said: “Thank you; we didn’t realise how much was possible.” They thought that student voice was something about fundraising and just giving feedback when the teachers asked them to. They didn’t realise that they could actually start something on their own and actually be the drivers of that change.

Roger Holdsworth

The heartening thing is that what once were crazy or out-there ideas are now being realised. Within SRCs, there’s a conscious effort by students to move from the model of ‘student voice for charity’ to ‘student voice in leadership and teaching in school’. This has been phenomenal and wasn’t there 12 months ago.

But it takes conscious effort. At the VicSRC Congress, I asked people when they arrived to write me a paragraph about the most significant thing in the SRC over the last 12 months. 60 percent of the responses were about fundraising. That was in their first ten minutes of the Congress, but they never talked about fundraising again. They then started talking about students running professional development for teachers, and about students being on teacher selection panels for example.

That ‘normalising’ of student participation is important. In the mid-80s there was a survey in Victoria through a Ministerial Working Party on Student Participation. Schools were asked about their practices, and many responded: “Oh, we do cross-age tutoring of course.” It’s the ‘of course’ phrase that’s really interesting. What was a ‘way out’ idea ten years before, could now become a fairly standard practice in schools. That’s why I’m optimistic.

However, there’s also a pessimistic side, because what was happening was that schools were taking the best students in the school and getting them to represent the school as tutors, rather than seeing this as an inclusive program to enable all students to learn and take on roles of responsibility and value.

Dana Mitra

What is the thing that you’re most struggling with in the research you do? What support is needed to get bigger and better work than we’ve done?

In my own work, the issue is about supporting adults. We know a lot about how to support young people; there’s a lot of research about how to scaffold young people doing this work. But we don’t know as well how to support adults to be supportive in these very alternative contexts: how to step back and let students lead the way versus scaffolding that. There are some who know how to do that, but it’s rare. That’s one to work on. I’ll just throw that out to the panel: what are some other dilemmas that need more work and sharing?

David Zynger

One of the advantages of organised student voice is the recognition that there’s a plurality of student voices. We tend, in many situations, to listen to those voices that are most like our own: the mainstream voices, the in-class voices. This is doing student voice or student participation a real disservice. We need to see education, broadly speaking, through the eyes of the most marginalised, the most oppressed, as bell hooks calls it. Then we can actually understand how they are doing in school.

My big second worry that I need to know more about, is a danger also that we consult students, get them to participate, but what we really want to do is to use them to ramp up our scores, our attainment and satisfaction scores. That’s disempowering rather than empowerment – and it’s exploitative. I think it’s a real danger.

Roger Holdsworth

This is reflected in Michael Fielding’s recent writing. He talks about student voice not being value free. He says we need to ask a further question about student voice: “What is all this activity for? Whose interests does it serve? Is student voice a neutral technology or an inevitable expression of a set of values and assumptions, not just about teaching and learning but about the kind of society we wish to live in.” (see Connect 197: 11)

Lynne Searle

Student voice being used for research is quite different from student voice being developed in that situation. In research you are establishing a question and then wanting to find an answer.

If you are working in a school, your purpose is not research, but to change outcomes. Your motivations are very different. In my own context, the reasons that I felt compelled to change things were because I didn’t think that students were particularly engaged. How do you change entrenched attitudes in a successful but conservative school?

As well as building the capacity of students, we have to build the capacity of staff. You have to find a way that’s not threatening to staff. I did that through developing student leadership. There those successes were obvious, and that built teacher confidence in student capacity. Then it can move forward.

It depends on what you’re asking students to do and what you are empowering them with. For a lot of teachers, they’ve got their power from their knowledge and understanding, and if they’re no longer the master of that subject discipline, who are they and what are they? They are the ones who frame themselves as well with questions: “What is teaching? What is learning? What is my role in this?” We talk a lot about student voice, but students are just one part of what is a in a school. Students come and pass through, but the teachers remain. And teachers can often be very reluctant to give up what they see as their culture. They see their culture remaining, and the students pass through.

On the other hand, the students believe: “We are the school; you are just here doing your jobs.” It’s about bringing those people together and having a dialogue, to increase the understanding of what you know and how you work together in that context.

Kaye Johnson

That issue of power is one of the biggest dilemmas in bringing all staff along and in urging them listen to and actually hear the students – on a whole variety of subjects.

Another concern I have is about sustainability. How long will this focus, this commitment to genuinely listen to students in this place, stay unless many
school leaders absolutely support it. And how can we work with staff and students and parents to promote it if they won’t. What will happen?

Samantha McClelland

If you are a student and don’t have the support of your teachers – and your Principal especially, then you have difficult issues surrounding where to go for support. There is only so much, and so many resources that an external support group can do. If you don’t have that support in school, you will have an uphill battle to achieve these things. That can end up bringing tension to your school rather than creating harmony.

Eve Mayes

We’re talking about wanting to have student voice that is representative for and of the students who may not be comfortable with expressing themselves, especially with voice that is focused through language and is about being articulate. One of the stories I was going to share was of a student who left the program. He had been active in the research, but left and then graffitied a photo and wrote: “this school is shit”. I’ve thought: what’s going on with him?

Maybe he didn’t feel that he could contribute his critique through this issue. He had said he wanted to go back because it was too hard and boring. So he needed to express it and kind of re-territorialise his critique and what he wanted to express. It wasn’t the same, like the way he’d like to have it.

Brian Massumi talks about the imperative to participate: “You are under orders to be yourself – for the system... You become who you are in expressing yourself. You are viscerally exposed, like a prodded sea cucumber that spits its guts.”

I just love that image. “You are exposed down to your inmost folds, down to the very peristaltic rhythms that make you what you are... It’s not simply enough to champion interactivity. You have to have a way of evaluating what modes of existence it produces, what forms of life those modes of existence might develop into.”

We have to strategise how not to make “prodded sea cucumbers”: “at the same time as you don’t want to let them stay in their prickly... skins.” Then he talks about you have to “leave creative outlets”, you have to “build in escapes. Drops, sink holes. And I mean build them in, make them in, make them immanent to the experience.” And I think that sort of opens up to me that there is a lot more to explore.

Roger Holdsworth

Years ago, we were running training for students about participation in schools, when we realised that we were firing students up about these issues, and they were then going back into schools where there wasn’t support and where they were getting shot down by an unsupportive principal and the faculty there. We were doing them a disservice.

Comment/question

What theoretical lens have you drawn upon? Have you drawn upon theory in your exploration and investigation of student voice?

Dana Mitra

I use community of practice theory in which I look at how students work together and other group dynamic issues. I use institutional theory and social movement theory from sociology to look at school reform, protests and other organisation and institutional changes. I use youth development theory to look at student changes.

This is something we haven’t even touched on. There’s activist work which is prominent in New York City and LA and San Francisco: this work looks at challenges to schools from the outside in much more contentious ways. This work is often labeled Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) in the United States.

David Zyngier

I take a critical race and class lens to these issues of empowerment via various areas of work: critical pedagogy. As a teacher educator, one of the ways that I’m trying to overcome some of these issues in my graduating classes, is that all (or at least some them) come out with a semblance of understanding of what I’ve learned along the way. This came out of my Ph.D. work in 2007, where I was working in a school, asking the students what they wanted from school and what they wanted from teachers. The principal said: “Well you’ve done some great work here; you’ve been here for 18 months collecting data. Can you share your outcomes with the staff tomorrow; and, because they don’t have time to read all your stuff, can you just give me four dot points and an acronym because that would be really useful.”

I went back and looked at all my work in one night and I came up with something that I can actually share and I share it with my students. It’s my small contribution, if I can call it that, to theory.

I call it CORE pedagogy, and this is what the children told me. So this is what I told the principal and the staff. I said: what the children want is education that CONNECTS to their background, that they can have OWNERSHIP of, that RESPOND to their needs now, not later on but now. Finally, because it comes at the end, it’s the most important: the need for EMPOWERMENT -- that empowers them to see that education can make a difference in their life. That’s called CORE pedagogy and it basically frames all the teacher education programs that I run and do.
Comment/question

Oftentimes, parents are disconnected from school. They may be engaged or disengaged. If student voice is a way to help students feel connected and engaged, what indirect influence does that have on bringing parents closer?

Dana Mitra

A school in northern California, where more than half the students dropped out, had a lot of first generation high school students in that school. They used student voice to mobilise the parents. They realised in that context that the student were a bridge to their home and could navigate both worlds in a way that their parents really couldn’t.

We found that the focus of change in that community was actually to have students serve as a leadership to their parents and the teachers. We tried to mobilise the parents themselves. In struggles to mobilise parents and some communities, the high school is actually a way to then bring your parents to the school in a safe place.

David Zyngier

Critical to the success of both the RuMaD Program and the Enhanced Learning Program, are two things: they’re long-term, so they’re not just one day or one week – they go over a longer period of time; secondly, they end with a celebration and that celebration is telling the community what is done.

Those of us who have children will know that when you ask your kid when they come home from school: “What did you do in school today?” the answer can be: “Not much”. “How was it?” “Okay.” But if they have been involved in student empowerment they will be telling their parents what they’ve been doing. If they’re only involved in doing time or doing school, then ‘okay’ and ‘not much’ is all that the parents will ever hear.

Eve Mayes

I want teachers and parents to also make meaning of what they think student participation means: what are the issues with it, what is great about it, what are the challenges. I’m very interested to hear what the parents would say about what they’ve seen in their students’ or their children’s experiences: how that affects their experiences with the school as well as if it’s changed anything for the positive.

Lynne Searle

Parents, just like teachers, need to see some success. There’s an inevitable cynicism or a mistrust of the system: “nothing will ever happen.” For young teachers, they’ve never done this before. Older teachers say: ‘It didn’t work then, it won’t work now.’ It’s about developing a culture where they know that their voice is valued and those sorts of changes take time.

Comment/question

In a primary school setting, it does take a while. I’ve been working with kids in this way over the last two years. It took a while to develop the culture because before that there were selected student leaders representing five year olds and 12 year olds rather than all children having a say. It took us a while to work it through. When we asked the students initially what they wanted, they wanted swimming pools, bike tracks, more play time. It took us a while to get into the culture, the deeper thinking. It’s certainly working now but it took us a while – both for students and parents.

Kaye Johnson

Again it comes back to developing capacity and that takes time with students and with teachers. Being aware of the authentic student voice: they’ll tell you but is that what you really want to hear? If you ask students, very often they don’t have the experience initially to be able to articulate what it is that they want.

Eve Mayes

We found that going to other schools and sitting down with Sydney University students – seeing completely different ways that schools can be structured; this opened their eyes to other possibilities.

Samantha McClelland

If students haven’t already been involved in their school, or student representation isn’t on the agenda at all, then students have developed a passive mindset. If something does come up that might be in their interest, their reluctance to participate may just be because they’ve always seen themselves as pawns in it. Even if it was something that they had initiated, and they had taken ownership of the concept, then maybe it could be more strongly communicated.

For further information, contact Dana Mitra at: dmitra@psu.edu

Student Voice Research and Practice Facebook Group

www.facebook.com/groups/studentvoicepage/

The open facebook group mentioned at the start of this article, was initially established by Dana Mitra, and is now supported by the work of academics, practitioners and students throughout the world. It provides a valuable community of people working and interested in the area of ‘Student Voice’ - in Australia, USA, UK, Italy and elsewhere – as well as access to useful resources and examples, and up-to-date information about initiatives. You can easily log on and join the group at the above address.
The third Student Voice Seminar will be held at the School of Education, Cambridge University (UK) in late June 2013. As well as the main seminar day (Wednesday June 26), there will be pre- and post-seminar sessions. This is the draft agenda for the three days:

**Pre-Seminar Session:**
**Tuesday June 25: 2-7 pm**
To give participants a chance to meet one another, share materials and resources, and network informally.

Following a welcome from Alison Cook-Sather and Julia Flutter, participants will share in small groups or pairs about the work they do related to student voice, and their experience at previous summers’ student voice seminars or other venues. This will then be shared with the whole group.

Participants will also be encouraged to share video material, share or sell books on their work, and create poster display boards that can remain on display throughout the three days.

**Main Seminar Session:**
**Wednesday June 26: 9 am - 5 pm**
To give participants a chance to share works in progress that themselves link across lines (of context, level, role, etc.) or, as a group within a particular session, make such links.

There will be sessions on the following themes, with 15-minute presentations, responses from student discussants, and 20 minutes of discussion of methods and approaches:

**How to Listen to Students:**
- “Listening to Girls’ Voices on Bullying Through Working with Tweenage Co-Researchers and Teenage Focus Groups.” Helen Heam, University of Nottingham, UK
- “What Can Participatory Methods Derived from Inclusive Research in the Field of Learning Disabilities Offer to Student Voice Research in Higher Education?” Professor Jane Seale, University of Plymouth, UK

**Curriculum:**
- “Negotiating the Curriculum as a Way of Developing Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights in Schools.” Jeroen Bron, Senior Curriculum Developer, Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO
- “How Our Definitions of Curriculum in Higher Education Impact on the Nature of Student Participation in Curriculum Design.” Catherine Bovill, University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK

**Assessment and Self-Assessment:**
- “Student Voice in Assessment at the Policy/Major Decision-Making Level.” Jannette Elwood, Queen’s University, Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK
- “Self-Assessment: A Process to Liberate and Sustain Learners and Their Learning.” Dr Roseanna Bourke, Senior Lecturer, Academic Group Director, Educational Psychology, School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Victoria University, Wellington, NZ
- “Voices from Students, Academics and Employers on the Need to Re-Design Assessment in Higher Education.” Elisabeth Dunne and Derfel Owen, University of Exeter, UK

**Ethics and Expansion of Student Voice:**
- “Voice and the Ethics of Children’s Participation in Research.” Prof John O’Neill, Professor of Teacher Education and Director of Research Ethics, Massey University, Palmerston North, NZ
- “Mind the Gap: Creating a Family Learning Environment that Facilitates Learner Voice.” Kate Wall, Senior Lecturer, Durham University, Helen Burns, Research Associate, Durham University, Anna Llewellyn, Teaching Fellow, Durham University, UK

**The Schools Students Want: Cross-Context Analyses:**
- “Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning: A State-Wide Model.” Helen Beattie Ed.D., Founder and Director of “Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning.” Vermont, USA; with Dana Mitra, Penn State University, Pennsylvania, USA
- “Participation, Connection and Rupture: Cross-Age, Cross-School and Cross-Sectoral Links Across Heterogeneous Australian Settings.” Eve Mayes, Kadek Arya-Pitanyh and Susan Groundwater-Smith, Australia

**Post-Seminar Session:**
**Thursday June 27: 9-12 am**
**Workshop on Sustaining Student Voice Work:**
Facilitated by Roger Holdsworth, publisher of Connect, volunteer/supporter with the VicSRC, the umbrella body of Student Representative Councils in Victoria, Australia.

Questions we will explore together will include: How do we bring about change? How do we work to change attitudes and cultures, that go beyond working with people who are already thinking alike? What are the best approaches to use with teachers who might, in the first instance, dismiss ‘student voice’ or any form of partnership? What is our ‘theory of change’?

For more information - and particularly if you are interested to attend - contact Alison Cook-Sather: acooksat@brynmawr.edu
Save the Date for Congress 2013

Regional Conferences, Congress 2013

The VicSRC Congress in 2013 will be held on August 2-3 at Oasis Campsite in Mt Evelyn. Congress brings students together from across Victoria to discuss and debate education and school based issues that matter to them. The issues to be discussed and debated at the Congress will be set by you - students in SRCs across the state. You might lead a discussion and tell others about what you’re doing and/or what you’re passionate about. You might suggest ways in which other students can get involved. You might propose a proposal for action to be taken by the VicSRC, by local or state government or by the Education Department.

More information about how to register for the 2013 VicSRC Congress will be in our term 2 VicSRC newsletter and on the VicSRC website: www.vicsrc.org.au/events/congress

Regional Conferences

Prepare for Congress by attending one of our Regional Student Conferences during term 2. For five years now the VicSRC has run a series of sub-regional SRC student conferences across Victoria. These are highly successful in enabling students to meet together between schools, learn from each other and work together on common interests. Conferences are one day events hosted by local schools, held within school hours and delivered and resourced by the VicSRC.

A list of conference locations will be sent to schools during term 1. You can also keep checking the VicSRC website for updates during the term. If you are interested to host a Regional Student Conference in your area, please contact the VicSRC Coordinator: coordinator@vicsrc.org.au or call 03 9267 3744.

After hosting a VicSRC Regional Conference in 2012, Wodonga Senior Secondary College wrote to the Vic SRC:

As a regional school in Victoria, we were pleased to be able to host the VicSRC Regional Conference at Wodonga Senior Secondary College - a significant conference for young adults in rural schools. It is very difficult for the students who are enrolled in Hume Region schools to access the quality resources provided by your organisation.

The cost to students to travel to and from Melbourne is exorbitant and the associated replacement teacher costs impact on our ability to provide students with the opportunities to extend their repertoire of skills in areas of leadership and engagement in their education. Added to this, the hours involved in travelling make it less attractive for our rural students to access quality programs that your organisation support and offer.

The positive feedback from the participating students has been overwhelming. This is a snap-shot of a student’s perspective of the day provided by Sarah Tilev:

“This year WSSC was lucky enough to be the host of a Victorian Student Leadership Conference. Four schools from around the Hume Region participated in a day jam-packed full of activities and workshops, run by Erin from the VicSRC, all building our skills and knowledge on how to run a successful Student Council.

“One of the most valuable things we took away from the day was running a campaign in about 15 minutes. We came up with the catchy name: ‘Operation Motivation’ and a purpose: To put a smile on the students’ faces. After writing short, inspirational messages on a bunch of sticky notes, we were unleashed into the school grounds and stuck our little notes anywhere they would stick. In doing so, we all learnt how fantastically easy it is to run a campaign without funds and weeks of planning. The conference left us with heaps of great games and activities to bring back to our Student Council and we can’t wait to share them with the other members.”

As you can appreciate, we are truly supportive of everything the VicSRC has been able to provide to us in terms of resources to support and strengthen our strong and vibrant Student Representative Council at Wodonga Senior SC. We trust that you can continue to support students across Victoria and in particular in regional areas. We would certainly be prepared to host a future VicSRC Conference in North-East Victoria in the future. Again, the opportunity to participate in our own ‘back yard’ ensures that we can nominate students to be involved who possibly would not have had this opportunity.

Di Larkin
Student Leadership Coordinator
Vern Hilditch
Principal

Wodonga Senior Secondary College

Connect 199:
How the VicSRC Congress Changed My Life...

I tried to make small talk, but it always returned to the same three questions: ‘What school?’ ‘How big is your SRC?’ and ‘How much did you raise at your last free dress day?’

Attending the VicSRC Congress for the first time in 2011 was a completely new experience for me. I had only been on my school’s SRC for less than a year, so being asked to go to a three day camp about a statewide student organisation was daunting.

But that was not nearly as unsettling as the perspective that the camp would cause me to develop. While I found that the majority of the students I spoke with did just stick to those aforementioned questions, I encountered other students whose work and contribution through their SRC were integral to the functioning of the school community.

And wasn’t that a reality check!

Until that point, each fortnight my select group of friends would turn up to our meetings and greet the few other students in the school who were remotely interested in ‘leadership stuff’. At meeting after meeting, our SRC president, a Year 10 student, would expect us to discuss the same four things:

1. Fundraising;
2. School ‘issues’;
3. Fundraising; and

We were actually quite pleased when we were able to announce to the three students listening at the assemblies that we had raised $800 for an obscure charity. After all, that was the way it had always been at our school, and no one seemed interested in challenging the status quo.

But by the third day of Congress 2011, I felt inspired that things could be different. I finally felt empowered to make a positive difference at my school. However, I was soon to discover that my proposed changes would come a little too late.

At the first SRC meeting at my school after the Congress, I was determined to challenge our SRC’s limited agenda. I sat in my chair, waiting for my chance to speak. However it soon appeared that the school had a different sort of change in mind. I vividly remember stopping our President mid-sentence to check that I had heard her correctly. And I had: the SRC was indeed being discontinued the following year. Silence followed in the meeting. When I was asked to present my item, I swiftly responded: ‘Well, there’s no need anymore.’ So there the meeting ended: what else was there to discuss?

However, it hasn’t stayed that way. I’m pleased to report that, over 12 months later, we are again poised to re-create an active SRC at our school – with a renewed energy. Maybe that crisis was what we needed to make us realise the importance of the student voice in the school. I’d like to report some lessons we learnt along the way?

How to Create an SRC

Stage 1: Being Heard

Last year was not easy. I was not able to campaign for the reestablishment of the SRC until second semester. After all, the SRC had only been shut down for less than six months. The first step – my first hurdle - was to get an opportunity to present my case for an SRC to the senior teaching staff. After several letters of request to the Principal and hurried conversations in the corridor, I finally received an invitation to present the case for an SRC to the next School Leaders’ Meeting.

Stage 2: Being Listened To

That first meeting was difficult for me – and probably for the teachers also. After an hour of insisting on the necessity of an SRC (including references to the UN Charter of Human Rights) it appeared that I had not been able to convince the staff. However, perhaps to give me something to do, or to check if I was just a lone voice on this matter, I was instructed to facilitate a forum for the student body to present their views on ‘student voice’ in the school.

The teachers set the date, to which I responded. I planned how I would facilitate the discussion between the two or three students (my friends) who I knew would attend. Much to my amazement, 24 students attended (from Years 9 to 12). This was over double the numbers I had expected. Even more surprisingly, the same group of students who complained that: “No one at our school listens to student opinion” were the same ones who now proposed that an SRC should be established (even without my prompting).

Lone voice? Not any more!

Stage 3: Negotiations

Armed with my notes from the meeting and the support of 24 other students, I re-entered the School Leaders’ Meeting determined for a resolution to the issue. Again, 15 minutes into the discussion, once again I felt like a student, sitting sheepishly in a classroom. However, this time, I was determined not to let this uncertainty abate my resolve. I was firm (perhaps a little too so). And 45 minutes later, the consensus in the room was that there would be an SRC next year.

On leaving the meeting, you might have thought that this outcome would have made me happy. After all, what else is one meant to feel from success? But I must admit that my elation was moderated by some disappointment. After all my stress on the need for a student-led body, the school was more convinced by arguments around how an SRC would assist the school, rather than the students. Thus the school still would...
like to dictate the structure, focus and aims of the SRC, when I felt that these choices should be left up to the students. It is our council after all.

2013

So, where are we now, entering 2013?

The greatest challenge that I (and fellow students) face is the different perceptions that people have of what an SRC actually is. Most of the people at my school (students and staff) still seem to believe SRCs are for fundraising; or perhaps they are for providing timely advice when the school requests it.

Having had the opportunity to talk with students from many other schools, including at two VicSRC Congresses, I now believe something different. This has allowed me to consider what makes an SRC an SRC. Is it its structure? Is it the work that the SRC does? Is it even how representative the SRC is of students’ views?

I think that the true nature of SRCs has become clouded by an emphasis placed upon the formal processes of elections and meetings, and the unquestioned commitment to a focus on fundraising. Not one person in any of my meetings asked me what I envisioned for the values that the group would hold. No-one asked how we would evaluate the success of the SRC. Everyone was preoccupied with describing how the elections would be held and the group would be run.

The sad truth is, with a focus like this, SRCs are being set up to fail.

So that’s my challenge now. How can I, with the support of other students in my school who are thinking along similar lines, make sure that our ‘new’ SRC doesn’t just exist, but is rather a vibrant body with a vision, with values, with plans and with criteria to assess for its own success.

This article has been contributed by a secondary school student from a secondary college in Victoria, who has requested anonymity.

VicSRC Executive Actions

The VicSRC Executive (15 students elected by their peers) is hard at work on the issues identified by students at last August’s VicSRC Congress. The current VicSRC Newsletter: Student Advocate, is being sent to all secondary schools in Victoria at the start of the year, and contains updates from Executive members about some of these initiatives. There is information in the newsletter about:

Extra-Curricular Activities

We do lots of things at school as well as the classes we take: music, drama, debating, sport, SRC, school committees... While some of these things might be included in our official school curriculum and get recognition, much also is considered ‘extra-curricular’ and goes unrecognised... (read the full story in the VicSRC newsletter)

Action Against Bullying

All students should feel safe and happy within their school environment. However, for many students, bullying is hindering this... (read the full story in the VicSRC newsletter)

Tutoring

Have you ever thought that students can make exceptional teachers? A resolution passed at the last annual VicSRC Congress on Peer Tutoring suggested this can happen. Peer tutoring can be run a number of different ways: it be one on one tutoring or with a group. There are many different options and avenues that can be used to organise a peer tutoring session... (read the full story in the VicSRC newsletter)

SRC Guidelines

What’s the importance of an SRC? Why should every school have one? And should there be some official guidelines about how an SRC operates? ... (read the full story in the VicSRC newsletter)

IDAHO Day: International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia

Urge your Student Council to take a step towards creating a safe and inclusive school by participating in the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia on May 17th 2013... (read the full story in the VicSRC newsletter)

The VicSRC receives funding support from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and is auspiced by and based at the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic). It can be reached there on 03 9267 3744 or, for the cost of a local call from outside Melbourne on 1300 727 176; or by email: coordinator@vicsrc.org.au
W
ith the increased interest in student voice – which is any expression of students about learning, schools, or education – tokenism is bound to happen. Tokenism happens whenever students are in formal and informal roles only to say they have a voice, instead of purpose, power, and possibility. Without that substance, student voice is little more than loud whisper into a vacuum.

Today, adults tokenise student voice and students tokenise student voice. This article explains how. The following are 51 ways to tokenise student voice right now. The topic is explored at the end, and there are some resources.

51 Ways to Tokenise Student Voice
1. Student voice is seen and treated as a special activity that only fits in a certain place at a certain time.
2. One particular student is asked over and over to participate in adult activities.
3. Adults discuss student voice without talking to students.
4. Students are treated favourably for sharing student voice in a way that adults approve of, while students who share student voice in disagreeable ways get in trouble at school.
5. Adults consistently ask specific students to speak about being a student in school meetings or at education conferences.
6. Student voice is only listened to for fixing specific issues in schools, instead of addressing everything in education.
7. A school club will do programs to specific students, without letting those specific students do programs for themselves.
8. Adults hold a celebration dinner for the school and invite 10 students to join 1,000 adults.
9. Students are only asked about topics that affect them directly, rather than the entire school body or education as a whole.
10. Students are not taught about issues, actions, or outcomes that might inform their perspectives on activities.
11. Adults tell students they have a voice and give them the way they are expected to express it.
12. Student voice is isolated on issues seen as student-specific challenges like school colours, dance themes, bullying, and technology.
13. Adults install specific students in traditionally adult positions without the authority, ability, or background knowledge adults receive in those same positions.
14. Adults constantly tell students about their experiences when they were students.
15. A single student’s busiest times of year revolve around the education calendar, outside regular student activities, because they’re attending conferences, meetings, summits, and other education activities that require adults to invite them.
16. Adults don’t tell students directly the purpose of their involvement in school committees or education conferences, except to say that they are The Student Voice.
17. Students are told that sharing their voice is as good as it can get.
18. Adults control who hears, sees, or communicates student voice.
19. When students walk into a meeting, every adult knows there are students attending without knowing their names, where they’re from, or what school they attend.
20. During a meeting adults expect one student or a small group of students to represent all students.
21. Students or adults perceive that students are being tokenised and thereby undermine students’ abilities.
22. Students are treated as if or told it is a favour for them to participate in decision-making.
23. On a panel, on the Internet, or in a meeting, students are given little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions before speaking.
24. Students are not taught about the democratic purpose of student voice.
25. Adults invite students to share their knowledge, ideas, opinions, and more, and then ignore what they say.
26. One student speaker is invited to talk at an education conference, at a school board meeting, or in an Internet space like Twitter or a Facebook group.
27. Students who attend an education rally are singled out for their attendance.
28. Adults only invite students who are not likely to assert themselves, make demands, or complain, to adult education meetings and activities.
29. Student voice is treated as unique, infallible, or is otherwise put on a pedestal by adults.
30. Adults take students away from regular classes without giving students any recognition in the form of credit for their learning in education activities.
31. Adults choose articulate, charming students to join education activities.
32. Students are given representative roles that are not equal to adult roles in education activities.
33. Adult/student power imbalances are regularly observed and not addressed in classrooms and schools, while student voice banners and programs happen in other times.
34. Adults are not accountable to students in education activities.
35. Adults refuse to acknowledge the validity of student voice they disagree with.
36. Students are punished when student voice activities don’t meet adult expectations.
37. Schools use student voice for some issues, and ignore it regarding others.
38. Adults in schools take pictures and videos of students without listening to what they have to say.
39. Adults seek out one, two, or ten students as the most popular in their school to represent student voice.
40. Students are not given the right to raise issues, vote, or share their unfettered opinions.
41. Student-led school research is used to back up adult problem-solving without engaging students in problem-solving.
42. Nobody explains to students how they were selected for an activity.
43. Adults allow students to talk on their school’s facebook page or twitter account and not at school committee or district school board meetings.
44. Adults interpret and reinterpret student voice into language, acronyms, purposes, and outcomes that adults use.
45. Students become burned out from participating in too many traditionally adult-exclusive education activities.
46. Students are not seen or treated as partners in the education system by adults.
47. Students think it’s obvious that they have a lack of authority or power or that their authority is undermined by adults.
48. Adults don’t know, state, or otherwise support the purpose of engaging student voice in the public education systems of democratic societies.
49. Students are limited to sharing their voice on issues at the local building level, not in district, state, or federal activities.
50. Students don’t understand which students they are supposed to represent.
51. Students are asked to create a representation of student voice that never leaves the classroom or education program they’re in.

Exploring Tokenism
When adults appoint students to represent, share, or promote student voice, they are making a symbolic gesture towards young people. This step is generally meant to increase or demonstrate student engagement in topics adults think they need to be heard about. It can also be meant to appease student and adult advocates and stop people from complaining.

When students specifically seek to represent, share, or promote student voice, they are generally seeking a portion of control over their personal educational experience. In schools, this can look like joining student government, starting a student voice club, or holding a protest after school or at a school board meeting.

Unfortunately, these approaches to student voice actually reinforce adultism in schools. They do this by reinforcing adult power and highlighting the inability of students to actually change anything in education without adult permission.

Tokenism happens in school policy and through activities in education every day. It is so deep in schools that many students and adults never know they’re tokenising student voice, and students don’t know when they’re being tokenised. Students often internalise tokenism, which takes away their ability to see it, and adults are very invested in it, which takes away their ability to stop it. It is important to teach students and adults about tokenism in schools and how it can affect them.

So what can we do? Here are some ways to stop tokenising student voice:

Student Voice Is THE Missing Piece In School Reform.

Learn More At www.SoundOut.org
Overcoming Tokenism

1. **Choose different students** who have a range of diverse experiences and opinions.

2. Don’t limit student voice to **single issues at convenient times**, by creating numerous activities that are infused throughout schools, to engage broad numbers of students.

3. **Engage as many students as possible** in every possible circumstance.

4. Treat and tell students they are **experts** in their own experience in schools and do activities that reinforce their expertise right now.

5. **Train students and adults on student voice**, and don’t assume that simply because they are students or work with students they understand student voice and can speak on all issues related to education.

6. **Avoid any representative activities** that position students as officials on their peer group, instead concentrating on that specific student as a person.

7. Throughout the education system, **promote equitable and full transparency** between students and adults.

8. **Reach out individually to students** who aren’t traditionally heard in schools, not only to students you personally know and like.

9. Don’t just create special and unique student voice opportunities; instead, **infuse student voice everyday** through regular classroom activities, extracurricular activities, and things that students already do.

10. **Practise mutual accountability** with students through student-led evaluations of you and your work, whether you’re a teacher, program director, or student leader.

11. Invite students to form **student/adult partnerships** by working together in class, education program, organisation, or conference. Get them active early in the planning cycle.

12. Engage students in and **use a broad array** of activities, programs, organisations, and conferences that have fun built into them, but aren’t focused solely on having fun.

13. **Teach students about education**, the school system, how it functions, what its roles are, and what its significance is within a democratic society.

14. **Provide opportunities for students to connect** with each other outside traditionally adult-exclusive education activities so they can see that they’re not the only students in the room, and that they have things in common past their age-based identities.

15. **When sharing student voice on a specific topic**, provide a variety of perspectives and not just ones you agree with from the easiest students you could listen to.

16. **Make space for each student** as an individual who has her or his own stories, perspectives, ideas, and knowledge.

17. **Build the capacity of students** to lead their own activities and participate as equitable partners with adults throughout the education system.

18. Remember that all issues throughout the education system are student issues, because in the education system, **all issues affect students**.

19. After learning what the choices are, allow students to **decide** which issues are important for them to share their voice in.

20. When appropriate, explain to students that not everything they suggest will be acted on, but may inform decisions going forward.

Ultimately, adults who are committed to engaging student voice in education must move beyond student voice by integrating **Meaningful Student Involvement** into classrooms, programs, school board rooms, and beyond. This reflects the ethical responsibility all educators have to acknowledge the capacity of students to affect, drive, promote, and create school improvement goals, activities, and initiatives.

With more classrooms, school boards, education programs, and organisations concerned with student voice, there’s more tokenism. Learn more about student voice in schools at SoundOut.org, explore Meaningful Student Involvement at http://soundout.org/frameworks.html and contact us at http://goo.gl/NQnsT.

Adam Fletcher
Meet the Team for 2013
introducing members of the VISTA Executive

It is with a sense of excitement that I introduce you some members of the VISTA Executive team for 2013. Over the break, the Executive team has been hard to work setting the agenda for the year ahead. Each member has written a short bio and some details about the Student Council at their school.

HAYLEY MERAT teaches Grades 3/4 at Kingsville Primary School, having previously taught Grades 1/2. She has been the SRC Teacher Adviser of the Junior School Council for two years and is excited about taking a new direction and approach with the Student Council at her school in 2013. She aims to create a student-driven open forum for students to come and share their ideas.

The Junior School Council (JSC) at Kingsville Primary School is going through some large changes in 2013. In previous years the group has consisted of one student from each class across all year levels. This year, the JSC will consist of 15 students from Years 5 and 6, as the school is trying to create a JSC that is predominantly student driven.

The election process involved students self-nominating, writing and presenting impressive speeches and subsequently being elected by their peers. As it is early days and while the group has been elected, it has not yet had a formal meeting, so the meeting schedule and process is yet to be decided.

The students will be involved in deciding on what positions and roles will be made within the group (President, Vice President etc), how decisions will be made, and how they will involve the wider school community.

The JSC at Kingsville PS is very much a work in progress. I hope to be able to share our experience in re-establishing our JSC with you throughout the year.

JOEL AARONS was not (to his hazy recollections) involved in Student Councils when he was at school. He has been the SRC Teacher Adviser at Bentleigh West Primary School for four years now. Joel joined the VISTA team in 2011 and has led the development of The VISTA Podcast series.

Bentleigh West Primary School is justifiably proud of the leadership program we have developed and the students that come out of it. In addition to the SRC and School Captains, we have the Environmental Leaders, ICT Leaders and House Captains. We have Vice Captains in every group and all captain positions consist of Grade 6 students.

As the year draws to a close, we start preparing our Grade 5s (soon to be Grade 6s) for thinking about applying for leadership in the new year. Kids are encouraged to apply for School Captain, SRC Captain, Environment Captain or ICT Captain.

Meetings are held weekly and operate using formal meeting procedures. I meet with our School Captains prior to the meeting and develop the agenda with them. Our meetings are held at lunchtime and are open to the wider student body to observe and participate in. It is not uncommon for us to have 10-15 students ‘guests’ in attendance at our meetings.

As our student population continues to increase rapidly, 2013 will see a review our student leadership structure and an investigation into alternative models that allow for greater student participation and involvement.

DIANNE PARKINSON is the SRC Teacher Adviser at Narre Warren South P-12 College and has a long history of involvement with Student Councils.

Narre Warren South P-12 College has over 1700 students on one campus. During 2012, we provided a variety of leadership opportunities to students from Grade 1 through to Year 12. Initially it involved a selection process where students applied to be Captains, Vice-Captains and members of the Student Voice Team for their year level. We had over 90 applications and these were processed and students were selected for 30 allocated positions – on average four positions per year level. Every person who applied also had the opportunity to be on their Year Level Student Voice team, which meant at different times of the year they assisted their Year Level Captains to work on specific tasks for their year level including lunchtime activities and preparing proposals representing issues of concern from their year level students.

Once selected, students were required to attend regular meetings. For the senior students, these were held at lunchtime, whereas for the junior students, these were held at both lunchtime and during class time. These meetings involved deciding on key activities we wanted to run for the whole school and/or particular year levels, fundraisers we wanted to do and which organisations we wanted to fundraise for and key issues that were important for us and our year levels that we wanted to raise with the Principal and the Assistant Principals at the school.

To inform all students about what the Student Voice team were doing, we:

• created noticeboards to let students know what is happening;
• went around to classes and told students what was going on and asked for feedback;
• had a ‘suggestion box’ at each reception area in the school;
• led focus groups including groups that were responding to the Attitude to School survey and discussed issues specific for each year level in the school and then brought back any ideas to the Student Voice team;
• regularly presented at the Primary and Secondary School Assemblies;
• went around to classes and told students what was going on. For Year 8 students we created a Facebook Group (note: a Facebook group – not a page, therefore controlled by us and not Facebook) where students voted on what sport they wanted for lunchtime activities and made suggestions for end of year awards;
SCOTT DUNCAN first became involved with student leadership in 1993 as president of the Junior School Council at his primary school and has been involved with Student Councils ever since. In 2008, he joined the VISTA Executive to re-establish the organisation. Scott is currently the SRC Teacher Adviser at Cranbourne East Primary School.

2013 will be the third year that Cranbourne East Primary School has been in operation.

Our SRC consists of four representatives from each of Years 2 to 6 along with our two Year 6 School Captains. The SRC Representatives are elected to their positions in the previous year. Students are required to review the job description for each role and nominate for the positions they wish to stand for, develop campaign posters and prepare a speech to present in front of their year level. The voting process is overseen by the Australian Electoral Commission who provide the ballot boxes, booths and assist with the counting of the votes. Our school captains are selected via an interview panel comprising of myself, our school principal and the outgoing school captains.

We begin the year with a formal training day where we explore what it means to be a leader, how to run effective meetings and develop action plans for the year ahead.

Whilst an element of our work focuses on fundraising, we have worked to ensure that this does not become our core business. We have participated in the development of our school travel plan where we promote students walking or riding to school, provided feedback around the development of our student engagement policy and helped review the Student Attitudes to School survey.

RESOURCES FOR GETTING YOUR STUDENT COUNCIL STARTED

If you’re new to the role of SRC Teacher Adviser, the VISTA website is loaded with resources to help you get your Student Council off to a great start in 2013. It is a great way to connect with other SRC Teacher Advisers. We have also updated our Getting Started resource to help you get the most out of our website.

VISTA members can access, from our Members Only section, the following resources:

- Agenda and Minutes Templates
- 2013 Calendar of Major Events
- Action Planning Templates
- Creating a resource kit for SRC members

Visit our website and check them out now: http://srcteachers.ning.com

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP OR JOIN TODAY!

VISTA members working in primary schools should have now received your membership renewal notice. If this is not the case, can you please contact us at vista@srcteachers.org.au so we can ensure that your contact details are correct and up to date. Be sure to renew ASAP to get the most from your membership.

Not a VISTA member? Why not? As a VISTA member your membership entitles you to:

- A range of networking opportunities locally and across the state;
- Subscription to our Members Only e-newsletter alerting you to upcoming events and new resources;
- Discounts with Second Strike for tailor made leadership training days;
- Discounts to Form 1 Lane, the professional development seminar for SRC Teacher Advisers;
- Access to the Members Only section of our website;
- A copy of The VISTA Compass Resource CD when you join.

By comparison, VISTA membership continues to remain well below the prices charged by other professional teaching organisations: $80 a year – that works out to just over $6 a month!

We are now also offering special membership discounts to pre-service teachers.

To become a member, download your membership form from our website today!
As we have previously advised, the next issue of Connect (#200 in April) will be our final print publication. Connect will be produced electronically after that date: if you are a subscriber, copies will be sent to you by e-mail every two months, or you will be able to download your own copy of Connect from the Connect/ACER website (where back copies are currently archived): research.acer.edu.au/connect/

This access to Connect will be FREE at that point: no more paid subscriptions. We will be able to provide information, stories, case studies and resources to the widest audience at no cost.

The Transition
During February and March, we’ll be writing to all current and recent subscribers, with an invitation to join the Connect e-mail subscription list. If your subscription has recently expired, or expires with this issue (#199), we’d ask you to renew your subscription as normal - the renewal notice invoices you on a pro-rata basis.

If your subscription expires after issue 200 (and you therefore will have ‘credit’ with Connect), the letter will provide you with options for the balance: to leave the credit as a donation to the work of Connect, or receive an earlier issue of Connect to discharge paid subscription obligations, or receive a Connect publication in lieu of those issues.

At the moment, all issues prior to the last six (ie all but the last 12 months’ issues) are already freely available on the Connect/ACER website. The usual process of adding back issues (from 2012) will continue, with one issue added every two months until April. Starting in May 2013, we’ll then progressively add the remaining issues – approximately one a week – until all issues are on the website in June 2013.

New Subscriptions
If you are finding Connect for the first time, or have not been a subscriber for some time, you are also welcome to join the new e-mail subscription list. Simply e-mail us:

r.holdsworth@unimelb.edu.au

with your name, address, phone number and, most importantly, e-mail address. We’ll then add you to the list and send Connect to you every two months, starting in June.

Content
Connect will continue to carry practical stories and resources - from and for primary and secondary schools – about student participatory practices in classrooms and schools ... in curriculum, governance, networking, community and so on.

Those stories and resources will continue to be your stories. You are encouraged to contribute your experiences and learnings for others to read.

All about Student Action Teams, including some hyper-linked mini-case studies, at:

www.asprinworld.com/student_action_teams
UN Youth Conference

On-Line!

We’ve almost run out of print copies of the first Connect publication: Student Councils and Beyond (from 2005). And many of the ideas have subsequently been reflected in the Represent! kit from the VicSRC (www.vicsrc.org.au/resources/represent).

So we have made all of Student Councils and Beyond (a compilation of articles and resources from many earlier issues of Connect) available on-line for FREE. It can be downloaded (as one document or in sections) as PDFs from the Connect website. Find it at:

www.asprinworld.com/connect

Connect on Facebook

In order to assist in the transition to the new digital Connect, we now have a presence on Facebook. Find us at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Connect/360372760717566

We’re already posting some news, links and stories there to complement what you see in the print version of Connect. It would be great if you could go there and ‘like’ us, and watch there for news of Connect’s availability on-line - for FREE - in mid 2013!

UN Youth Conference

The Victorian UN Youth Conference is the largest residential youth conference in the state of Victoria. The weekend will feature educational workshops, guest speakers, problem-solving, leadership training and Model United Nations debates. Open to all students in Years 10-12, the conference is a must for student leaders, public speakers and anyone seeking to broaden their perspective on the world.

The Melbourne Conference will be held over the Labour Day weekend (March 8-11) at Oasis Christian Camp in Melbourne’s east, and the Bendigo Conference will be held two weeks later (March 22-24) at Barclay on View Motor Inn, 181 View Street, Bendigo. Both conferences cost $185, but a discounted early bird price of $165 applies before February 15.

Please contact Andrew Deller-Blue, the Victorian Programs Director, for more information at vicprograms@unyouth.org.au, or visit www.unyouth.org.au/vic/conference

UN Y outh Conference
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ASPRINworld: the Connect website!

www.asprinworld.com/Connect

Connect has a website at ASPRINworld: ASPRIN is the Australian Student Participation Resource and Information Network (“a cure for your student participation headaches”) – a still-emerging concept. The Connect section of the website is slowly growing, with information about subscribing, recent back issue contents and summaries of and order information for Student Councils and Beyond, Student Action Teams, Reaching High and Switched On to Learning. There are also links from the indexes of recent issues to their archived PDFs (see below).

Connect is now also archived and available electronically: research.acer.edu.au/connect

All issues of Connect are being archived through the ACER Research Repository: ACEReSearch. Connect issues from #1 to #180 are available for free download, and recent issues can be searched by key terms. See the ASPRINworld site for index details of recent issues, then link to and download the whole issue you are interested in.

www.informit.com.au

In addition, current and recent issues of Connect are now available on-line to libraries and others who subscribe to RMIT’s Informit site – a site that contains databases of many Australian publications. You can access whole issues of Connect as well as individual articles. Costs apply, either by a library subscription to Informit’s databases, or through individual payments per view for articles.

www.asprinworld.com/connect
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Connect 200 or 300: An Invitation to Dream!

What is student participation, action, voice, engagement, involvement etc like at the start of the year 2030? We would like to write issue 300 of Connect now - and publish it as issue 200 in April 2013. Noting where we’ve come since Connect 1 in late 1979, what will Connect 300 have to report in 2030?

This is an invitation to write for Connect 200 and to look forward ... to write the articles now that will be in Connect 300. All contributions welcome - and should be e-mailed to r.holdsworth@unimelb.edu.au to arrive by the end of March.

Local and Overseas Publications Received

Connect receives many publications directly or indirectly relevant to youth and student participation. We can’t lend or sell these, but if you want to look at or use them, contact us on: (03) 9489 9052 or (03) 8344 9637

Australian:

Inspire (DEECD, Melbourne, Vic) Issue 11: December 2012
Re-engagement, training and beyond: Evaluating the second year of a Community VCAL education program for young people (George Myconos, Brotherhood of St Laurence) 2012
Student Advocate (VicSRC, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 7 No 1; February 2013
Yikes (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 10 Edition 6; December 2012
Youth Studies Australia (Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, Hobart, Tas) Vol 31 Number 4; December 2012

International:

Relimage Learning (Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together, Vermont, USA) Fall 2012
Rethinking Schools (Milwaukee, WI, USA) Vol 27 No 2; Winter 2012-2013
10 Ideas for 21st Century Education (Innovation Unit, London, UK)

Is Your Connect Subscription Up-to-date?

The number on your Connect label tells you the issue with which your subscription expires. Please renew promptly - renewal notices cost us time and money!
Back issues of Connect from 1979 to the start of 2012 (that’s over 32 years! – from #1 to #193) are now all freely available on-line! Thanks to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), back issues of Connect have been scanned or up-loaded and are now on the ACER’s Research Repository: ACEReSearch.

You can find these issues of Connect at:

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The left-hand menu provides a pull-down menu for you to select the issue number > browse; the front cover of the issue is displayed, and you can simply click on the link in the main body of the page to download a PDF of the issue. Recent issues are also searchable by key words.

**Availability**

The most recent 12 months of Connect (ie the last 6 issues) will continue to be available ONLY by subscription until April 2013. These issues will then be progressively added to this site and new issues made freely available there from June 2013.

This ensures that Connect maintains its commitment to the sharing of ideas, stories, approaches and resources about active student participation.

**Let us know**

There may be some gaps or improvements necessary. As you use this resource, let us know what you find. (If an issue of Connect seems to be missing, check the issues either side, as double issues show up only as one issue number.) If you have any ideas for improving this resource, please let us know.

**Most importantly, please USE this resource.**

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