

10 BIG Ideas for Student Councils

Special Student Council Issue:

*In
this
issue*

- 10 BIG Ideas for Student Councils
- VicSRC Regional Conferences Planned
- NSW SRC 'Creating Connections'
- 'Why Have an SRC?': 1988 Resource Revisited
- 30 Years with Connect: Professor Art Pearl
- **Resources:** NSW Youth Participation Grants; *Reaching High* Authors Receive Awards; *Youth Empowerment: A MindMatters Approach*; *Improving Learning through Consulting Pupils*

Connect

Number 169: February 2008

STUDENT COUNCIL SPECIAL:

- 3 **10 BIG Ideas for Student Councils** *Connect*
- 13 **VicSRC Planning Regional Student Conferences** *VicSRC*
- 14 **Why have an SRC?**
1988 YACVic Pamphlets Revisited
- 17 **Creating Connections: Student to Student** *NSW State SRC*
- 18 **30 Years with Connect and its campaigns for valuing youth** *Art Pearl*
- 20 **NEWS AND REVIEWS:**
NSW Youth Participation Grants Program; Citizenship Awards for *Reaching High* Writer and Contributor; Publications: *Reaching High*; *Improving Learning through Consulting Pupils*; *Youth Empowerment – A MindMatters Approach*; *Student Action Teams*; *Student Councils and Beyond*
- 23 **CLEARINGHOUSE:**
Local and Overseas Publications; Documents; Website; Friends of Connect

Why does Connect exist?

Connect has been published bi-monthly since 1979.

It aims to:

- document student participation approaches and initiatives;
- support reflective practices;
- develop and share resources.

Cover:

10 BIG Ideas: see pages 3-12

Connect:

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Connect acknowledges the support of the Australian Youth Research Centre, Faculty of Education, The University of Melbourne

This Issue:

It's sort of traditional that *Connect* starts each year with a focus on support and ideas for formal student organisations - SRCs, JSCs, Student Councils generally. This issue is no exception.



The reason is simply that, at this time of the year, these groups within schools are being set up (if steps haven't already been taken at the end of last year) and are setting the course that will define their effectiveness for the rest of the year. Will they provide students with a real voice within schools, and a focus for important student action as part of schools' partnerships? Or will they be token groups, more dedicated to containing and limiting students' participation? Will they talk about 'some' or 'all' students? Will they think about learning or distractions?

We canvassed these ideas extensively in the *Connect* compilation book *Student Councils and Beyond* (still available from us - but copies are running out!). What can we add? Well plenty probably, as practices continue in schools and networks. The major article in this issue updates some possibilities for making Student Councils into real and important partners within the school by suggesting some **BIG IDEAS** in which they can be involved.

In revisiting these ideas, it has been interesting to look back at ideas and examples from recent history. Not just those in *Student Councils and Beyond* (which we keep cross-referencing in these ideas), but also some ideas that we wrote (with Sally Warhaft and Jo Wood) into a series of pamphlets published by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria in 1988. That's 20 years ago! So, this year, *Connect* will reprint these six pamphlets over its six issues. And we ask the questions: What's changed? Where have we moved on? Where have we gone backwards? What issues remain as important as ever?

Building Connect

As we enter our 29th year of publishing *Connect*, we'd really like to make another push to get these stories to a wider audience. Who does *Connect* go to? Well, about 500 individuals and organisations (school libraries, SRCs etc) around Australia (and a few elsewhere in the world). Most of those are subscribers - though we're always sending introductory copies to people who express interest.

Bumping into a continuing subscriber late in 2007, I was prompted to look at our records and wish to thank members of the 'First *Connect* 100', who are still with us (in order of subscribing): Peter Cole, Julie and Graeme Jane, Sydney Road Community School, Tony Knight, Jan Hargreaves, Jackie Ohlin, James Oakes and Social Education Victoria (as VASST).

However, we'd like to build our subscription base - doubling it would be great. If all current subscribers got someone else to subscribe, we'd achieve that. So here are three possibilities:

1. **Give a gift subscription to someone.** Use the form on the back page and let us know to include a welcome note to that effect;
2. **Lend your copy to someone** and strongly suggest that they subscribe before giving it back to you;
3. **Tell us the details of someone who should subscribe.** We'll send them a free introductory copy.

But your personal endorsement of *Connect* could be the best way to get 'the message' out there! Don't say 'oh yeah' and wait on someone else - **you** can help these ideas be heard.

Roger Holdsworth

NEXT ISSUE: #170: April 2008
Deadline for material: end of March 2008

What should Student Councils be doing? Strangely perhaps, many Student Councils struggle for ideas about how to represent students. Many complain that other students aren't interested.

So here are some ideas - **10 BIG ideas** - for starting some effective Student Council action in your school. You don't have to be doing **all** of these - and you may already be doing some of these ... or better things. Hopefully, some of them will be useful starting points for your Council. You know what will work and what is needed in your school.

As we've thought about this, we've realised that there are differences between the ideas that will work in primary and secondary school. But we've written these ideas here so that they can be adapted and used at all levels. Perhaps some of them will be more possible in secondary schools; perhaps some of them are more important in primary schools. We'd like some information back from you about your **BIG ideas** - what works for you? - so that you are effective.

We've also referred here a few times to the book **Student Councils and Beyond**. This was published by **Connect** in 2005 and contains lots of practical ideas as well as examples (eg of surveys). See elsewhere in this issue for information about ordering a copy.

1: Listening to Students

**Commit and plan
to consult**

Brainstorm ideas

Survey

Make time

**Report back
and discuss**

**Prioritise
issues**

**Feedback
results**

The purpose of this is to find out what students in the school are saying are the important issues for them - **so that the Student Council can act and represent students' needs**. Finding out might be as simple as *listening* to students' conversations, or starting a *discussion* in home groups (pastoral groups or English classes) or organising a formal *survey*.

The **first step**, however, is to make a commitment at a Student Council meeting that you **want to** find out what students are concerned about. **Why** do you want to do this? What will you **do** with the results?

Then **brainstorm** some ideas about *how* you could find out: think of conversation starters, how to get up in front of a class and start a discussion, or possibilities for a more formal survey (see some examples in *Student Councils and Beyond*: pages 67-69). Think of some questions to ask. How will you record the ideas that you hear?

You will need to **make time** to listen! That might mean reminding each representative to spend some time listening to others - before the next meeting. It might mean asking a teacher for time in class or in home groups to ask some questions. It might mean making time to create, photocopy, distribute and then analyse a survey.

You will also need to make time at the next Student Council meeting for representatives to **report back** about what they have heard. Set a deadline for listening, then put this high on your meeting's agenda. It might mean a longer discussion: What did people *mean*? *Why* did they say that? What's *really* worrying them? What should the Student Council be *doing*?

And that's the important question: **what should the Student Council be doing?** You probably can't do something about everything that students are concerned about. So what is your **priority**? (And why?) What are the **main** things that students are concerned about? What do they want their representatives to *do*?

You may also need to find out more information: **how many** students are affected by the important issue that some have raised? Perhaps you will need to do a more specific survey of students about the issue.

Finally, as you are working on the issues, don't forget to tell students what you are doing - **feed the results back** to them. Nothing annoys students more than being asked for their opinions and then never hearing what happened!

2. Ask About Opportunities for Student Council action

What major planning is being undertaken in the school, and how can the Student Council be involved?

Make appointment with Principal etc

Ask about plans

Emphasise value of student input

Ask for a formal approach

Make time on agenda to discuss

Set up student working groups

Gather student views and ideas

Feedback results to students

With the best will in the world, Student Councils can be overlooked when important decisions are made within a school. For example, a very supportive Principal in a secondary school forgot to let the Student Council know that there was a review of the Year 9 curriculum about to happen – and forgot to ask them for student input.

And a primary school forgot to tell their Student Council about plans for re-plumbing the school ... including re-positioning the drinking taps – and put them in the wrong positions because they didn't have student advice.

Sometimes, Student Councils need to ask about what major plans are being made in the school and how they might have a role in representing students on these.

Start by making an **appointment** with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Curriculum Coordinator, Welfare Coordinator or other relevant people to find out about the initiatives, plans or needs facing the school this year. What is already happening? What is likely to develop? And then ask the important question: **how can the Student Council help you involve students in this planning?**

You might need to argue the **importance** of getting input from students. After all, students have specialised knowledge about what happens around the school, knowledge that no-one else possesses. They are also centrally affected by these plans, so the implementation of the plans will depend on student knowledge about them and perhaps student agreement with them. The Student Council should be able to say that it is uniquely in touch with student views, and therefore can play a vital role in the development of the planning. It can research the issues, consult with students, and take part as a partner in the discussions and decisions.

If there are many plans, the Student Council representatives might need to **prioritise** what it can work on. What are the most important plans: the ones that affect students most? Which ones can students have best input on?

Ask the school to **officially approach the Student Council** to ask for their involvement. This might mean a letter to the Student Council outlining the planning and asking for their assistance. That way, the issue gets to be on the agenda of the Student Council. The letter should also give information about the **time-line** and the **opportunities** for getting involved. When do decisions need to be made? By whom? Can the Student Council be formally represented here?

Make time on your Student Council **agenda** to discuss these issues. Representatives will need time to take the ideas back to classes. It will probably be valuable to set up a special **Working Group** of students to organise the discussions. They will need time to talk about the issues, about how to get student input, and how to present the results to the school. A Working Group might also work alongside teachers and parents on the issue.

After the Student Council has considered what you've found out (results of research, collection of student views etc), make a **formal response** to the Principal or School Council. And don't forget to **feedback** that information to the students too, to let them know what is happening and what other students think.

3.

Manage It, Don't Do It

Some students approach the Student Council with an issue on which they want action.

Listen to the students and their reasons

Decide that this *is* an issue for the Student Council

Set up a Working Group of the students concerned

Appoint a Student Council member

Identify and ask a support teacher

Provide time for the Working Group

Agenda the topic at the Student Council

Publicise outcomes

*There are lots of things that the Student Council can do. If students are concerned about something (the environment, bullying, curriculum etc) they should be asking the Student Council to take action. But that doesn't mean that the Student Council has to do everything. The role of the Student Council can be to support those students who are passionate about something, to investigate and act on it, on behalf of all students. The Student Council **manages** the process – but doesn't have to **do** it all.*

When a group of students raise an issue, the first thing is to **listen** to them and their **reasons**. Ask them to make a presentation to a Student Council meeting: What is this about? Why is it important? Who does it affect? What should happen?

The Student Council will need to **agree** that this is an issue you think should be pursued. *(If you don't agree it is something the Student Council wants to support, there's nothing to stop these students then organising something for themselves, if they feel so strongly about it.)*

So the first step is to set up a **Working Group** of the students involved – make this a formal group of the Student Council. They might be surprised that you're asking them to do the work, rather than just doing it for them! But this is a great way to get more students actively involved, especially students who might not ever get to be on a Student Council. And it's less work for the whole Council.

Appoint a member of the Student Council to work with this Group – to support and liaise with them, and to advise them about processes.

The Group might also need a **supportive teacher** to work as a consultant to them, and the Student Council can identify that teacher, approach them, and ask if they're willing to do so.

The Working Group will need **time** to meet. So the Student Council can negotiate with the school for that time – and for academic credit for their work if that's appropriate and possible.

Time is also needed on the Student Council **meeting agenda** for the Working Group to report back on their progress and on their proposals. Putting it on the agenda also creates an expectation that the Group will take it seriously: meet, research and plan – and be accountable for the issue that is important to them ... and to all.

Finally, when the Working Group has presented its results, had its proposals accepted by the Student Council, and taken action – and when there are results – don't forget to **publicise** the work as part of what the Student Council has done. You could organise for the students involved, for example, to present at an assembly. You could also arrange for them to receive certificates or other acknowledgement of their work.

For more information on this approach, see the article in *Connect* 163 (February 2007) on page 10.

4: Set Up Portfolios

Brainstorm around
Student Council
tasks

Ask members of
Student Council
to nominate their
areas of interest

Allocate Portfolios

Define detailed
roles and tasks

Make times to
work on areas

Mentor younger
students

Make space on
Student Council
agendas for
reports

Review system at
end of year

The **purpose** of Portfolios is both to spread the work of the Student Council to all members (rather than rely on a small Executive), and also to make sure that **everyone on the Student Council is vitally important** to its work: everyone has a job, and the effective work of the Student Council depends on everyone doing their job well.

You could start by **brainstorming** about the tasks that are to be carried out by members of the Student Council. Everyone will be representing a group of students: a class or grade or home-group or a team. But as well as that, there is other Student Council work, both in terms of keeping the Student Council going, and in terms of the regular topics about which the Student Council acts: eg publicity, preparing meetings and agendas, overseeing finance, environment, canteen, website, teacher liaison, parent liaison and so on. This list will vary from school to school.

If you're new members of the Student Council, you may want to **seek advice** from last year's members or from a teacher who worked with the Student Council, about what the important areas are.

When you have a list (and you may need to add to it as the year goes on), make a **formal decision** to set these up as Portfolio areas. Ask all members of the Student Council to **nominate** their areas of interest – they may give preferences. *Each member is expected to take on one area.*

Then **allocate** people to each Portfolio. If you have a large Student Council or a small list, several people can be in each Portfolio area. But someone should then be the **convenor** of this Portfolio, with responsibility for coordinating it – like the 'Minister for ...'.

The role of the students in each Portfolio is to **manage** the area, not **do** everything in it. Those students have responsibility for making sure that the Student Council is working in that area, and that reports are presented to Student Council meetings about the area. If there are relevant issues raised in discussions, they can also be referred to the Portfolio for further discussion before coming back to meetings.

So the first task of each area will be to develop a **more detailed description** of the area of interest, and what the members will do. This should be presented to the whole Student Council for approval. But the good news is that you might only need to do this once, when you are setting up this system – though you will need to review it each year to check that it is still relevant.

There will need to be **time** on Student Council agendas for the Portfolio areas to report back – maybe not every meeting though (and you can pass if there's nothing new to report). Time is also needed for Portfolios to meet and work on their own – *perhaps every second Student Council meeting could provide this time to work in smaller groups.*

Portfolios are also a way for senior students to **introduce younger students** to the work of the Student Council, with a deliberate mix of ages and plans to 'teach' new students about what happens. They are also a way for students who are not on the Student Council, but enthusiastic about an area, to get involved.

Finally, any system is only as good as it works in practice. So at the end of each year, spend some time **reviewing** this system. What's worked well? What's not worked? Why? What changes are needed next year? What different Portfolios areas might we recommend?

5.

Get Out of the Fund-raising Trap

A:

Set up a Fund-raising sub-group

Give them power to make fund-raising decisions

Report back to Student Council

B:

Brainstorm about purposes of funding

Develop your Mission Statement

Develop your funding guidelines

Raise money

Advertise grants and call for applications

Compare applications with your guidelines

Provide funds

Follow-up grants about their impact

When we ask Student Councils what they have been doing, fund-raising – usually for charities – dominates the work. These are good works, they provide Student Councils with an ‘easy’ role in the school, they provide students with practice in organising ... but they also often mean that the Student Council does nothing else! In that way, fund-raising is a trap. It steals time and energy from the broader range of what Student Councils should be doing. Here are two ways to escape:

The first approach is to **set up a fund-raising group** as a Portfolio or sub-group of the Student Council. This group then has **power to organise events** that raise money on behalf of, and in the name of, the Student Council.

However the group should be required to meet outside Student Council meetings and to give a **brief report** (amongst other sub-groups) to Student Council meetings.

The second approach is more extensive, and can be used as a follow-on to or part of the first approach. It requires discussion about **why** the Student Council wants to raise money. This should be in terms of the **changes** that the Student Council wants to see – its purposes or goals in the community or the school. One way in which it can make these changes is by providing money to other groups.

So to start with, the Student Council needs to **brainstorm** the nature of these changes. This can be formalised in the development of a **Mission Statement** perhaps along the lines: “*We want to provide funds to achieve ... (this sort of world ... or this sort of change ... or)*” The Student Council should endorse this statement and formally set up a group to achieve this. In some cases, students have formed a **Student Foundation**, separate from the Student Council, but reporting to it, to do this work.

Then students can **raise money** ‘as usual’, with various activities negotiated with the school.

At the same time as raising the money, the Student Foundation (let’s call it that) also develops a set of **guidelines** to support its work. It will be making financial grants to groups, so how will it decide between groups and the work they do?

Once some money is raised (and the Student Foundation needs to know how much it has to give out), the Foundation **advertises** the availability of grants, and the guidelines by which it will make the grants. These can be advertised in the school or in the community.

When groups or individuals apply for a grant, the Student Foundation then **matches their reasons** against the Foundation’s Mission Statement and guidelines. Are the groups trying to achieve what the Student Council and Student Foundation want to achieve? Are they likely to succeed?

Decisions then have to be made about providing funding. If there’s not enough money, will part-funding achieve the goals? Only then are **funds provided**.

Finally, members of the Student Foundation **keep contact** with the groups and programs they are funding, to see if their funding is really making the changes they want.

More details about these approaches are found in *Student Councils and Beyond*, pages 29-36.

6. A Student Council Training Camp

Decide to organise
Student Council
training

Ask for support
from the School

Work out timing,
length, location,
cost

Book a venue and
facilitator

Collect ideas from
other schools

Work out program
details

Advertise and
persuade all
members to attend

Conduct training

Evaluate the
training

Student Councils need **time** to do their work properly. This is particularly important at the start of the year. A new Student Council needs **time to get together to learn to work as a team**, and **time to plan what it will do** throughout the year – and **how**.

The Student Council – and the school – should make a priority of some form of training 'retreat' as soon as possible in the school year, and make this a regular part of the school's calendar. If possible, this training should take place over several days – but even a half day is better than nothing. And where possible, this training should happen **outside** the school, so that the activities are not interrupted by bells or classes. A camp is ideal – but not always possible. **However, the most effective Student Councils do have an annual planning and training camp!**

Start by making a **commitment** within the Student Council. You should be able to say **why** you need a training camp or event.

However you will need **support from the school** to make this happen, so you'll need to **ask** and seek agreement: first from the Student Council support teacher (who is really important to make it happen, and will need to attend!), then from the Principal, and probably from the School Council. You will need to have some plans and details – including costs (but also details about when, how long, where, what). It is important to ask for funding support from the school.

So work out all the **details**: **When** is a good time in the school year? (the earlier the better); When will all students be able to attend? **How long** for? **Where** – a camp, or in a community venue? What will it **cost**? Will it be useful to have an **external facilitator** to present some training? Or can this be done by students and teachers? (*Possibilities: local youth workers, consultants, trainee teachers ...*)

And what sort of **program**? To think about this, think first about what you want to achieve. By the time you finish the camp, what sort of outcomes do you want? These will then define the formal training sessions (*how to run a meeting, how to keep minutes, how to report to classes etc*) and more general discussions (*what issues face us this year, how to manage time, possibilities for Student Council action*). It might be useful to **gather ideas** from other schools about their training and planning programs – you might know other Student Councils, or **Connect** or state-level student organisations can put you in touch with others. Also see *Student Councils and Beyond*, pages 72-94 for some ideas.

Advertise the program to all members of the Student Council. Your aim is that **everyone** must be there. (But that means you'll need to think about their study and work commitments, and also about cultural issues such as food and accommodation.) Talk to individuals and find out what they need to be able to attend. The support teacher might be able to **visit parents** to discuss the importance of the training with them.

And you're set ... to begin! Have a great time. Make sure it's **enjoyable** ... and **important!**

Afterwards, think about how it went. Prepare an **evaluation** by asking all students what went well, what could have been improved, and what plans they'd have for next time.

And file that information away for your **next** training camp.

7: A Speak-Out Day

*This is a **REALLY BIG** idea and one that takes a lot of organisation. It's not to be entered into lightly!*

Discuss at Student Council meeting

Make a proposal for Principal and School Council

Arrange possible day with school's Daily Organiser

Present to staff meeting

Develop topic starters

Organise students and teachers as facilitators and note-takers

Divide school into discussion groups

Feed results back to Student Council & School Council

Evaluate day and outcomes

The **purpose** of a Speak Out Day is to enable **all** students in the school to speak out on issues that are of concern to them. The idea is to have a time – say an afternoon – when all classes are suspended and the Student Council runs a series of **discussion groups**, either in normal class groups or in special mixed-age groups. Some of the discussion sessions can be about existing topics that the Student Council or the school wants discussed. Other sessions should be more open: using a 'search' approach, where students say what the important issues are, and reach agreement on the most important issues within the group. See *Student Councils and Beyond*, page 18, for one example.

To start, you'll need a **commitment** by the Student Council to the idea, and a clear understanding of why and how it might operate. Discuss this and **write down a request with reasons**.

Take this **proposal** to the Principal. In most cases, the proposal will need to go to School Council for approval, and this will take time. So don't expect an instant answer. You will also need to present **reasons** strongly: including what important outcomes there will be for the school. Visit and talk about the idea with the Student Council support teacher, the Curriculum Coordinator, the Daily Organiser (who does the timetable) and other people. The Daily Organiser can also help you with ideas about **when** this might occur – amongst many other things that are happening. Book it in.

Because you will need teacher support, you will probably need to present the proposal to a **staff meeting**, and give some ideas for what the role of teachers might be.

Good discussions don't just 'happen'. You need to **plan** how to start them and how to make sure they continue productively. How can you get student ideas? How can you make sure that the louder or older students don't dominate? How can you support shy students or those with language needs to speak up and be heard? You can develop some **discussion starters**, but you will also need to talk about **facilitation skills** – for students and for teachers.

On the day, the members of the Student Council should be the main **facilitators** of the discussions. Do you want teachers to help facilitate? Who else might help? In some examples, a team of local youth workers has been a useful group to assist open discussion.

It would be useful to provide some simple **training** for facilitators eg in a 1:2:4 approach for getting agreement within a group that is searching for the major issues.

And you'll need someone to **take notes** of what is being said.

The Student Council can **organise** the day – like a mini-timetable. Make sure everyone knows where to go, for how long, and what their tasks are. Also build some fun activities into the day, so that it's not all discussion groups; you could organise games or sports – and food if possible.

Have an assembly or forum at the end of the day to sum up. Collect all the notes and **summarise** them. What are students saying are the important issues to them? What are they saying about these issues? The Student Council will want to know these outcomes, and so will the School Council. **Report** to both groups.

Finally, you will again need to **evaluate** the day, finding out what works, what could have been improved and what you'll do differently when (not if) you do this again.

8. A Sharing Day for Local Student Councils

Discuss at Student Council and decide on a day

Get permission from Principal and others

Set date and space

Identify the local schools to involve

Decide how big: numbers, times

Invite schools

Decide on program and circulate this

Welcome visitors on the day: signs, name-tags

Have a great day!

Follow-up: evaluate and next?

Isolated Student Councils sometimes lack ideas and inspiration. Getting together with others can help a Student Council in its work and can provide both formal and informal training for members. Don't wait on someone else to organise this: you can take the initiative to invite other Student Councils to your school.

You need to be **clear** about **why** you want a day to meet with other Student Councils, and then take this as a **proposal** to your own Student Council for discussion and decision. *What do you want to get out of the day? What do you hope others will get out of it?*

Such a day will involve some changes to the school's timetable including use of rooms. So you will need **permission** from the Principal (and possibly School Council); others may be involved too (eg the Canteen might need to be involved). You will need to negotiate the idea, then set an **appropriate date, book spaces** (schools have used the library, a hall, common rooms and so on - or have found spaces in the community), and get **resources** (eg for food).

You will need to decide **how big** you want the day to be. Think about: How many schools? How many students from each school? How long will it go for? *(When begin and end? – think about travel times for others.)*

Identify the local schools that you want involved. Think about how wide an area is 'local'. This might depend on transport times and distances, as well as schools that have Student Councils. Teachers will be able to advise on schools that your school already networks with.

Write an **invitation** and send it to these schools. You'll need to say clearly about when and where and what times – and what you're hoping that students and Student Councils will get out of the day. Will they also need to do anything before they attend, or prepare some materials (eg a poster) for the day? Send the invitation to the Student Councils, but it might also be useful to send a copy to the Student Council support teacher and the Principal in each school.

Develop a **program** for the day. Some sessions that could be included are: a 'getting to know you' activity, sharing information about Student Councils and their work, some specific training (speaking, planning activities) – maybe a speaker if appropriate. Do you need a **facilitator** to help with the planning and the presenting? *(A local youth worker, or a teacher, or a consultant might be able to help.)* There are lots of ideas for possible programs and activities in the articles in *Connect*, or in *Student Councils and Beyond* (see pages 59-62).

You might need to phone the other schools and **remind** them, and ask that they send **RSVPs** – so you can prepare name tags, and food.

On the day, make sure that there are **clear signs** showing visiting students where to go – maybe some of your students to greet them. Have **name-tags** ready, and copies of the **program**, so they know what to expect. Let visitors know where the toilets are and of any restrictions about where they can go.

And make sure you have a great, valuable, enjoyable and busy day!

Ask students to complete an **evaluation** on the day; and talk about 'where to now?' Do other schools want to have more days like this? Will some other school take responsibility for organising the next one?

Afterwards, send a **summary** of the day – and further plans – back to all who took part.

9: Mentor Younger Students

A:

Create assistant positions

Meet together on the tasks

Report together to Student Council

B:

Decide to set up a junior training day

Get permission and set dates and times

Identify and approach the schools or grades

Follow up with formal invitations

Decide on a program

Decide who runs what

Welcome the students

Present the day

Follow-up: evaluate and write it up

Students get older and pass on - from primary school to secondary school; from secondary school to University, TAFE, work etc. What do you leave behind? Will the Student Council keep going and growing? What is your responsibility for this? Here are two BIG ideas.

The first idea is simple and can be used by any Student Council - primary or secondary: **Whenever you have some position or job, make sure you have a younger student as assistant.** So, for example, if the Student Council chairperson is in Year 11, have an assistant chairperson from Year 8. If someone from Grade 6 has responsibility for a Student Council newsletter, then have someone from Grade 3 assisting them. This way, younger students learn about the Council and its work, get skills, and are ready to take over.

You will need to make time for people to meet together, and also encourage older and younger students to both report to your meetings.

The second idea is more difficult, and *maybe* more relevant to secondary schools (though primary schools could adapt it). The idea is that the Student Council can organise a **meeting and training day** for nearby junior students. For example, a secondary school Student Council could invite all the feeder primary schools to send representatives from their Student Councils (eg JSCs) to a half-day event. Or a primary school Student Council could set up a training session for representatives from Grades Prep to 3 in the school to learn about representation, class meetings etc.

The steps involved are very similar to those in **Big Idea 8**. You will need to make a **commitment** first: that your Student Council thinks this is a good idea. Then you will need to seek **permission** to have and host this day. Negotiate about possible **dates and places**. It is suggested that, for primary school students, *a half-day is long enough*.

Work out **which schools** (or grades) are involved, and approach them. Do the schools have a Student Council? What do they call it? Are they interested to attend? (They will probably ask you for more details about the purpose and the program - so you'd better have this worked out.)

Think about what you want to achieve. Game-playing approaches are very useful here, but all the games must have a serious intention. There are lots of ideas for activities and programs in *Student Councils and Beyond*, pages 71-94 - including some worksheets you could copy to start small group discussions. Remember to make the day **inter-active** - it shouldn't just be you talking to the students! They should be learning by doing things.

Who will run what? Divide your Student Council into small teams, with each team taking **responsibility** for an activity or a session. Talk with teachers or youth workers or consultants about what and how you could present your session. **Practise!**

You might also need to **follow-up** the schools (or grades) and **invite** them personally. If possible, visit the schools (or grades) so they know who you are beforehand.

On the day, make sure you **welcome** them, especially if they're new to your school. Have food and drink for them at a break. Make sure the activities move along at a **fast and enjoyable pace**.

Finally, meet afterwards to talk about how it went - what you did well and what you should improve. An **evaluation** form can also get this information from the participants. Write up what happened. Then: *what's next?*

A Student Council Resource Bank

Talk about your needs at a Student Council meeting

Work out the form of resources that people need

Discuss with staff from the Library or Resource Centre

Work out how you will use resources

Work out a location

Find out what's available

Work out a 'wish list' and price it

Ask for a budget

Buy the resources

Review the use at the end of the year

This is a very simple idea that everyone will say 'Yeah' to, but one that then works out to be more complicated! The simple idea is that your Student Council should have the materials – books, training kits, ideas, DVDs etc – that they need to do its job better.

You'd better start by thinking about what it is that you do **need**. Raise the topic at a Student Council meeting and **brainstorm** all sorts of possibilities. Do you need **kits** to help you train or **ideas** from other schools (stories) or **sample constitutions** or inspiring and motivating **thoughts** - or what? Do you need these as **books, magazines, posters, DVDs, CDs, kits, photo-copied worksheets** - or what?

Early on, make an appointment to discuss your needs with the **staff** in the school's Library or Resource Centre. They will know what sorts of things are available - or be able to search for them. Importantly, they will also know what's **already in the school**, and perhaps under-used. *Where is that kit or that DVD that arrived a year ago and has been gathering dust?* Maybe the Student Council can use it better.

These staff will also be useful consultants on many other issues, such as how to **store** the resources, how to **keep track** of them and how to make them **available** to students. And they'll probably end up doing the **ordering** for you.

So work out how you want to **use** the resources. Do you want to work through some things in a meeting? Do you want to individually borrow them and read them? Do you want to have small groups discuss them? Do you want to show them to other students outside the Student Council (eg at assemblies)? Do you want to make a display of them around the school?

Take **Connect**, for example: *how do you use this as a resource? Is it passed round at Student Council meetings? Do students and teachers read the stories and ideas here? Where is it stored after people have seen it? If there are ideas there that might be used in the future, who knows about them? How could you use it better?*

That means you will also need to work out a possible **location** for these resources. This will depend on what you already have available and what is possible: **a Student Council room? a Student Council noticeboard? a filing cabinet?** The location should be both secure and available. You don't want precious resources going missing, but neither do you want them locked away where no-one can use them.

Once you've done all this, the Library/Resource Centre staff will help you draw a **list** together of what's available. You'll need to match this against your needs, against how you see yourselves using these resources, against your storage space – and against what you can **afford**. That probably means you'll need to **prioritise** the resources: what's your 'wish list'?

You will then need to go to someone (the Principal, the Bursar or the School Manager) to ask for a **budget** to get these resources. You'll need to be ready with **arguments** about **why** they're important, how you'll **use** them, and how they will **improve** the Student Council's work.

The most exciting time will be **getting the resources**, and putting them to use. Maybe **stagger** the purchases over a time, so they don't come all at once. That way, you can explore each one and work out a plan for its best use – before the next one comes. And you don't then forget that you got something.

Finally, *was it worth it?* After you've been using these resources for a time, **review** their usefulness and your needs. What do you still need? Are these resources being used? Are they still the most useful ones you need? And start all over again!

VicSRC Planning Regional Student Conferences Across Victoria to ask: WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU?



What are the issues that are important to and concern students in Victorian secondary school? What are student groups such as SRCs working on? What do students want and need to tell others about?

The VicSRC, the umbrella body for Student Councils in Victoria, is organising a series of **Regional Student Conferences** across Victoria in Term 2, 2008. These events will provide an opportunity for students to **speak out** about issues in their schools and communities. The ideas, concerns and issues that emerge from this process will form part of the agenda for the VicSRC's work in 2008 and beyond, and will also enable the VicSRC to provide advice about students' views to the Department of Education and other relevant groups. These conferences will also help to build local networking between students and their organisations. In addition, the discussions at the Regional Conferences will feed into the VicSRC's decision-making processes through its **Annual Congress** later in the year, where students from across the state will decide on action on behalf of **all** students. So it's important that all schools are represented at one of the Regional Conferences, making their voices heard.

At this stage, it is planned that there will be one or two conferences in each Department of Education region in Term 2. Further details will be included in a **VicSRC Student Advocate Newsletter** later in Term 1. Every secondary school SRC will be invited to send a group of students to one of the conferences.

The VicSRC has been asked by the Victorian Department of Education to listen to the ideas and views of students and SRCs in Victorian secondary schools. On some issues, the Department will want students – through the VicSRC – to give them information about issues that *they* choose eg about new or proposed education programs. In many more cases, the VicSRC is being asked about the issues that are important to students. And they need to hear from students to answer that.

The **Regional Conferences** will give students a chance to meet other students from other schools, and to hear about what they're doing. They will also provide some introductory *training* about what SRCs can do, and some ideas to make SRCs more effective. And they will include sessions to share and discuss the issues that students want to raise.

For more information at this point, contact the VicSRC on 03 9267 3744 or (at local rates): 1300 727 176. An invitation will arrive in your school during Term 1.

Do you want to host a Regional Conference?

*The VicSRC is looking for schools throughout Victoria that would be interested to host a Regional Student Conference in Term 2. This will be a one-day conference in your school, with approximately 100 students from nearby schools. You need to be able to offer a **space** for the day (date to be negotiated), some students to **meet and greet** visitors, **organise lunch** (costs paid by the VicSRC), and **chase up and accept registrations**. The VicSRC will do the rest ... though if the school/SRC want more involvement – great!*

If you are interested, contact James Tonson at the VicSRC urgently on 03 9267 3744 or (for the cost of a local call) on 1300 727 176.

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 at the cost of a local call from outside Melbourne on **1300 727 176** or by e-mail: **vicsrc@yacvic.org.au**

www.yacvic.org.au/vicsrc



In 1988, the **Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic)** published a series of **training pamphlets for Student Representative Councils**. These were written by Roger Holdsworth, Jo Wood, Sally Warhaft and SRC members at Exhibition High School, and illustrated by Mark Ryan (one of the students then involved with attempting to form a VicSRC).

1988: that's 20 years ago! How have the ideas about SRCs changed over that time? Are the training needs different now?

Throughout 2008, **Connect** aims to reproduce the contents of these pamphlets (with permission from YACVic, and with only minor edits), both to **celebrate** their production, but also to ask the **question**: If we were to revise and reissue them, what changes would be needed?

The first pamphlet in the series was about:

Why have an SRC?

Most schools in Victoria have some sort of student organisation. They're called things like **Student Representative Councils (SRCs)**, **Student Forums**, **Student Councils**, **Student Task Forces** and so on. We'll use the name **SRC** in this pamphlet.

In each case, they are made up of a group of students chosen to represent student views in the school. In some cases, students elect their representatives from home groups or forms; in others, the students are volunteers; in others, a particular class or group is recognised by students as their representative.

But why have an SRC?

What can an SRC do?

This pamphlet gives some reasons and some ideas. **But you should think about and decide on these questions for your school.** Your answers might be different!



Why Have an SRC?

If an SRC is going to work properly, it needs to know why it exists. That means reasons that make sense for the group.

And there have to be reasons that make sense for the individual people in the group. After all, an SRC has got to be fun. It's got to give you something for yourself. Otherwise, why keep going along?

Here are some reasons some students gave. Do you agree with them?

The Group:

"We want to make this school run better. We want to get more out of the school. If students share in deciding things, we'll work and learn better."

"We have an SRC so that students can share information and know what is happening in this school. The SRC is told about things and we can then tell other students."

"An SRC is a way for students to have a say and make sure they're listened to. We have to sort out what we want to say and argue for it."

*"Students need to get together with teachers and parents to decide on what is happening in this school. We're **partners** in making decisions. But students need somewhere to talk with other students and work out our own views first."*

"The students on the School Council need other students to talk with. They're often asked: 'What do students think about this?' It's useful if the students on School Council are also on the SRC."

Individual:

"I enjoy working to make things better for everyone. It's good fun working with other students."

"I wanted to find out what the SRC was about."

"I think I can change this school and get what I want."

"I can get out of classes. It'll be a good bludge."

*"I'll gain a lot of skills and confidence that will be useful for me later. I can also negotiate to get **credit** for my involvement – a reference or a report that I can use."*



What Can an SRC Do?

“What does your SRC do?”

“Oh, runs the senior disco and holds toffee stalls.”

The answers given by some SRCs only deal with some of the things that are possible.

There are three sorts of things that SRCs can and should be involved in. If you are restricted to fundraising, then there's a whole lot of the school going on without a student share in the decision-making.

Social and fund-raising events:

There's nothing wrong with organising socials and raising money. They can be valuable to:

- have a good time;
- get the SRC established;
- have students notice and trust the SRC;
- show students that the SRC can do things;
- raise money for things the SRC wants to do;
- give you valuable experience in organising things.

Even better if you can organise to have the work you do on these things included in your class work in some way – for example, fund-raising and book-keeping as part of Business Maths, and so on.

But how about setting up a social or fund-raising subcommittee or working party (a small group), rather than let the whole SRC take up all its time with this. This could also involve other students who aren't on the SRC. Then the SRC can get on with other things as well, like ...

Rules and administration:

The way the school runs – its rules, the relationship between students and teachers and so on – is an important part of the community. Quite often students want to have a say in these things. “It isn't fair that we have to ...” or “If only we could ...” are the sorts of statements that can start an SRC investigating and arguing.

These are often hard things for the SRC to get involved in. Are the decisions ones the SRC can make without talking with other groups? For example, if the SRC wants to consider changing the school uniform, it will need to involve teachers and, especially, parents in the decision.

But an even harder, but even more important, area for the SRC to get involved in, is ...

Curriculum:

The curriculum of the school is everything that is taught and learnt, the way that teaching and learning is done and everything else that the school sets up that affects teaching and learning. It's the centre of what school is on about.

Decisions are being made all the time about curriculum. Do we need a new subject in Year 8? Will we divide up Year 10 differently? How about trying a new reporting system? Doesn't assessment need looking at?

Who is actually making these decisions? The School Council usually makes the big decisions, though they are guided by the school's Curriculum Committee (in some schools, it has a different name). And the School Council gives power to other people (the Principal or coordinators of year levels, subjects, departments or sub-schools) to make other decisions.

Where a group makes a decision, there can be students involved. There are, legally, at least two students on the School Council (in Victoria Government secondary schools). *[2008 comment: this was true until about 1993, when this requirement was removed.]* Students have important and essential things to say about all these questions.

And an SRC is the ideal place for students to discuss these curriculum questions, to get other students involved in these discussions, and to tell its student representatives on other bodies what to speak and vote for and against.

It will be hard to bring up and talk about these questions, because it's fairly new for students to be involved in curriculum decision-making, and because these ideas are usually very difficult ones to argue about and get decisions on.

But just because it's hard to do, that doesn't mean you don't try. Student participation in decision-making comes easier with more practice.

Student Participation

Just as we said that there are three things that SRCs can be involved with, there are also three main areas to student participation:

1. **student bodies**, like SRCs, in which students get together to talk about things, to share information, to decide, to organise and to tell representatives what to do;
2. **student representatives** on decision-making bodies like School Councils, curriculum committees etc, where they share decision-making with parents, teachers and others;
3. **classroom participation** where students play an active decision-making and action-taking role in their learning – in things like:
 - curriculum negotiation (working out between students and teachers what is learnt and how it is learnt);
 - cross-age tutoring (students teaching other students);
 - community research, service and action (finding out information, doing community work, taking action over community problems and issues);
 - publication and publicity (through newspapers, radio, video – of the important things you've found out or have to say.)

There are lots more examples and ideas, but in all of them:

- students are making decisions;
- students are working together;
- students are doing important things;
- students are **VALUABLE!**

**Is your SRC valuable? Do you value your SRC?
Is it part of student participation in your school?**



Activities:

1. **Why do you have an SRC? What does your SRC do?** See if you can arrange a special one-day discussion for your SRC to work out why and how it will operate. It might be useful to book somewhere away from the school for this day.
2. **Where are the decisions made in your school?** (Which decisions? – Are different decisions made by different people or groups?) Draw a **decision-making map** of the school, showing the different bodies, who's on them and what decisions they make.
3. **Design a poster to show all the things the SRC has achieved.** You can display this around the school. Would these things have happened if you didn't have an SRC? Seeing what the SRC has done, will give other students confidence in you and encourage them to get involved too.
4. **Design another poster about the goals of the SRC.** You could also include some information for other students on what the SRC **could** do.
5. **Get an SRC notice-board where students pass regularly.** Talk with teachers about a regular place you can use to tell students what is happening on the SRC.
6. **Get an SRC pigeon-hole for your mail.** Can you get a space in the office where mail and messages can be left for the SRC?
7. **Design a survey of the school community about their views on what the SRC could do.**

Coming up in future issues of *Connect*:

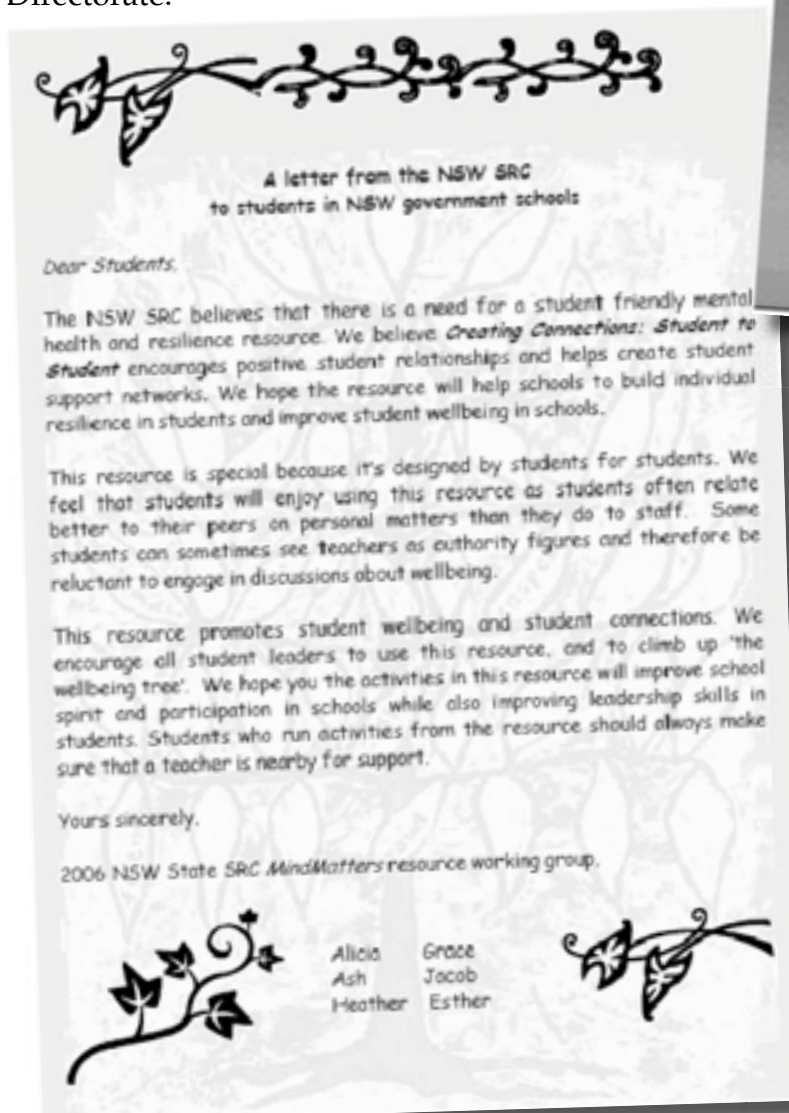
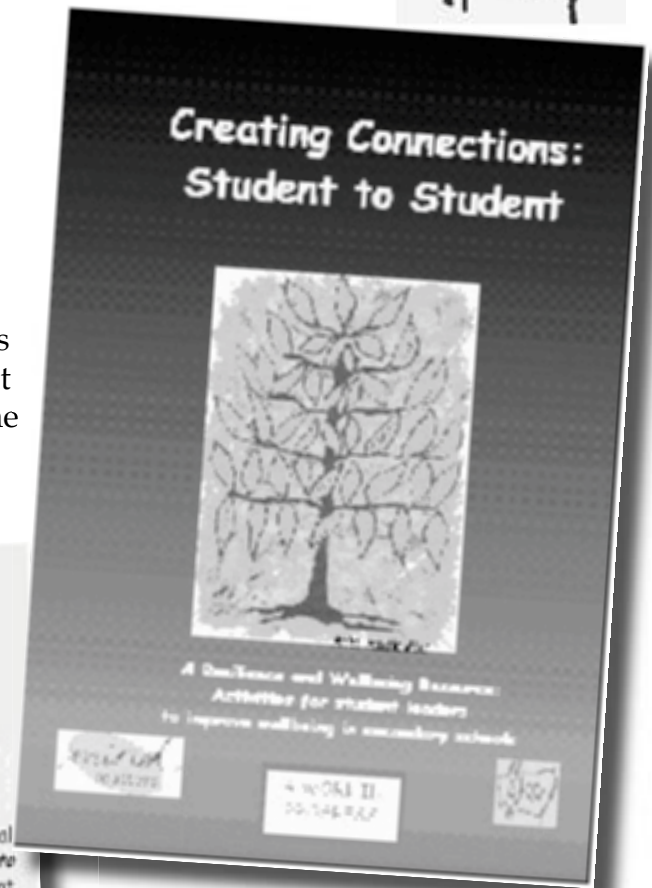
Making Decisions; Meeting Procedures; A Good Representative; Getting Ideas and Reporting Back; Making It Happen

Creating Connections: *Student to Student*



An exciting resource is to be trialed soon in selected NSW public schools!

Creating Connections: Student to Student is a resilience and wellbeing resource for student leaders to use with other students. This resource is the result of a successful collaboration between members of the New South Wales Student Representative Council (NSW SRC), *MindMatters* and the Student Welfare Directorate.



Activities in the resource have been adapted with permission from *MindMatters* booklets, *Enhancing Resilience 1 and 2*, and cover a range of areas related to improving student wellbeing such as:

- Team-building activities;
- Wellbeing activities;
- Strategies to help improve school spirit and mental health at school; and
- A list of internet sites that contain reliable information and health support networks.

If you would like any further information, please email:

student.leadership@det.nsw.edu.au

30 years with *Connect* and its campaigns for valuing youth

Art Pearl

I first met Roger Holdsworth in 1980 when he was a member of one of Tony Knight's task forces. Roger, never comfortable with the restrictions of bureaucracy, forsook a career as a state school teacher in favour of more open and creative avenues for unsilencing of youth. He used radio, community organisations and alternative schools as venues for young people to express opinion, develop new skills and knowledges, and confront established power. Somewhere along the line he created **Connect**.

Connect, for the last quarter century or so, has provided the only chronicle of youth participation in decision-making that affects their school lives. It is also the solitary long-term promoter of preparation for democratic citizenship. One can trace how far young people have come as informed citizens through a chronological review of the pages of **Connect**. One can also use **Connect** to chronicle the progress schools have made in accommodating youth participation in important decision-making. There is much to be learned by that perusal, but what is strikingly clear is that young people are more ready to take on responsibility than schools are ready to include them in the decision-making process.

Connect swims against the stream. What has been called education reform is in reality an effort to impose a doctrinaire draconian authoritarianism on schooling. Neither Labor nor Liberal regimes have been sympathetic to youth concerns. Both Labor and Liberal impose arbitrary standards on students and slavishly limit curriculum and student involvement in decisions. Neither appear willing to recognise that the primary goal of a tax-supported education is to prepare informed and responsible citizens. In some very serious ways, we have gone backward.

Without a citizenry prepared for the awesome responsibility of democratic citizenship, not only is it unlikely that democracy will survive, it is also unlikely – because of the emergence of ever more serious and ever more complex environmental, economic and social problems – that the species will survive.

In many ways Holdsworth has breathed life into a moribund educational system. Schools, mired

in a 19th century approach to education, desperately and unsuccessfully try to fit docile students into an existing society to reproduce obsolete economic and political thinking. Such an approach, even when it succeeds, it fails.

In an ever more rapidly changing world, the only acceptable role of education is to prepare students to change the world – responsibly. Such a school restores an appreciation of the importance of the public good. Such a school challenges students to: invent a world compatible with a sustainable environment, search for peaceful solutions to conflict within and between nations, strive to eliminate poverty and promote reconciliation between hostile groups be they religious, ethnic, racial or whatever.

Connect has done far more than connect with young people and forge connections between young people and the governance of schooling. **Connect**, by fostering discussion and debate, has made important strides to connect schools with reality, something schools have been directed by dominant political and economic establishments to not merely ignore but to deny.

Because so much of the future will depend on what the student knows and how that student can assemble knowledge to solve critical problems, the emphasis of schooling has to be on developing in students the capacity to do important research and to organise the findings of that research as solutions to such problems as global warming, war, poverty and racism.

We are at a critical stage in history. We either take control over our collective destinies or slide into certain oblivion characterised by wars without end, the consequences of a devastated environment in ever more frequent and more horrifying floods, hurricanes and droughts, and deeper and more widespread poverty. The imperative, if not the only hope, is a sea change in education. Only when **democracy is brought to education and education to democracy** will we escape our present political paralysis. Only when students **experience democracy** will they understand and appreciate its fundamental principles.

A democratic education includes:

1. a democratic authority who makes a serious attempt to persuade students of the utility of what is being taught and is willing to negotiate with those unwilling to accept that authority;
2. all students equally included as valued members of a learning community;
3. a curriculum providing the students with knowledge (or the know-how to find and use knowledge) to solve pressing personal and social problems;
4. an opportunity to learn and develop the arts of democratic citizenship that include listening to others, learning how to defend arguments with logic and evidence, organising those with similar views into an effective movement, and withstanding pressures when unconvinced by the arguments of others;
5. protection provided by the fundamental rights of freedom of expression, privacy, and a due process system that includes presumption of innocence, speedy trial by a jury of peers, and protection against cruel and unusual punishments;
6. an optimum learning environment characterised by:
 - a. encouragement to risk;
 - b. absence of unnecessary discomfort including boredom, humiliation and loneliness;
 - c. meaningfulness;
 - d. feelings of competence;
 - e. usefulness;
 - f. equal sense of belonging to a learning community;
 - g. hopefulness;
 - h. the excitement that comes with feelings of discovery;
 - i. the sense of creativity that comes with invention;
 - j. the feelings of ownership gained when what you do in school is for you and not for the teacher or the system;

and lastly:

7. equality, defined as equally encouraging all to reach one's fullest potential.

Students learn to be informed and effective citizens by exercising citizenship at every grade level in projects designed to further the public good - to make the class, the school, the community and the world a better place.

Of the above seven fundamental principles of democracy that Tony Knight and I identify (see above and Pearl and Knight, *The Democratic Classroom*), Roger has found ways for **Connect** to bring attention to six of them.

Connect has been a beacon showing the schools the way to go. It has also been trailblazer, revealing the best of current school practices. It will be invaluable in helping schools change direction. Hopefully, Roger Holdsworth will find the energy to keep **Connect** serving the needs of youth and the rest of us for another quarter century. We sure need him.

Roger it has been great knowing you.



Art Pearl is Professor of Education, emeritus, University California Santa Cruz where he served from 1972-1991 and is adjunct professor Washington State University Vancouver (2001-). His primary interest is in reforming public education to make it more compatible with democracy. He believes students should get an understanding of democracy by experiencing classrooms informed by democratic principles. He believes that students should be prepared for the responsibility of democratic citizenship by practising democratic citizenship in kindergarten through 12th grade classrooms. Art's most recent initiatives are at: <http://educationtosavedemocracy.org/>



Student Action Teams: **Implementing Productive Practices in Primary and Secondary School Classrooms** ISBN: 978-0-9803133-2-1

Student Action Teams - teams of students who, as part of their school curriculum, adopt a community issue that they care passionately about, research it, decide what needs to be changed or improved and take action to achieve that.

In this book (April 2006) primary and secondary schools in Melbourne's northern suburbs tell how to establish and implement **Student Action Teams**. They describe their students' work researching and acting around *traffic safety* and the *environment* and reflect on what they have learnt: the basic principles of **Student Action Teams**, their practical operation, and the stories of successful approaches and outcomes in two projects. The principles and approaches outlined here can be used to guide developments in any school - acting alone or in a cluster. Includes sample worksheets and proformas.

Order NOW from **Connect**: \$33 or \$27.50 for **Connect** subscribers.

News & Reviews

Young people: Got ideas for a local project? Need extra funds? Time to make it happen!

NSW Youth Participation Grants Program: A new funding opportunity for NSW young people

YAPA's *Youth Participation Grants Program* gives young people the power and resources to develop and implement community activities in their local area.

A selection panel will award grants to young people who can demonstrate that:

- * their project benefits the community in some way;
- * the idea for the project has come from young people;
- * the application has been created by young people; and
- * their project will increase community interaction.

If you are aged between 12 and 25 years, and living in NSW, you can apply for a youth participation grant.

Any type of activity which benefits the community in some way may be funded, so long as it's:

- * run by a group of young people;
- * legal and safe;
- * has a wider community benefit; and
- * and you can make it happen.

Ideas for projects:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| * sporting events | * local radio programs |
| * websites | * film making |
| * music workshops | * competitions |
| * youth forums | * recreational programs |
| * discos | * outings |
| * school based projects | * artist exhibitions |
| * festivals | * setting up a music studio |
| * community days | * band nights |
| * movie nights | * drama performances |
| * break dance competitions | * publications |

Make us an offer, and we'll consider it. See details of 2007 recipients on the website.

You can apply for up to a maximum of \$5,500.

More details at: www.yapa.org.au/yapa/ypp/index.php where you can also download the brochure (opposite).

Citizenship Awards for Reaching High Writer and Contributor

*Andrew Skinner, co-writer of the **Reaching High** book published by **Connect**, has received the Junior Citizen of the Year Award for Moira Shire in the Australia Day Awards. Daisy Ing, a contributor to the book, was also awarded Junior Citizen of the Year for Nathalia. Congratulations to both of them - and to the support from the rest of the **Reaching High** team!*

Read all about their work:

Reaching High:

A Program Promoting Positive Approaches to Learning Differences

Reaching High tells the story of 14 years' work around literacy in north central Victoria. Student participatory approaches are central to a program that caters for students with learning differences, with an annual student-run three-day **regional camp** as the culmination of that program. This camp brings in *adult role models* who have, or have had, learning differences, to act as mentors for students. Past student participants now also act as leaders, adult role models and assistants.



This inspiring and exciting 120-page book documents the development and operation of the **Reaching High Program**. It outlines the theory and community links behind the program, and how it is built on the active and strength-based participation of students. Includes a DVD of practical ideas.

First published by **Connect** in December 2006;
ISBN: 978-0-9803133-0-7

Order now: \$33 each
(\$27.50 for **Connect** subscribers)

HOW MUCH CAN I APPLY FOR?

Up to a maximum of \$5,500

WHO CAN APPLY?

Anyone aged 12 – 25 who is living New South Wales.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO DO IN RETURN?

When you or your group receives money for your project, you must:

- use the money as agreed
- report back about your project and what you've learnt

WHO TO CONTACT FOR MORE INFO

Lam HUYNH
YOUTH PARTICIPATION PROGRAM OFFICER
Youth Action & Policy Association NSW Inc (YAPA)

146 Devonshire Street
SURRY HILLS NSW 2010

P: (02) 9319 1100 or 1800 627 323 ext. 6

F: (02) 9319 1144

E: ypp@yapa.org.au

WEBSITE: www.yapa.org.au/ypp

GOT IDEAS FOR A LOCAL PROJECT?

NEED EXTRA FUNDS?

TIME TO MAKE IT HAPPEN!



A new funding opportunity for young people



WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

The main aim of the Youth Participation Grants Program is to give young people in New South Wales the power and resources to develop and implement community activities in their local area.

A selection panel will award grants to young people who can demonstrate that:

- their project benefits the community in some way
- the idea for the project has come from young people
- the application has been created by young people
- their project will increase community interaction

To apply, you just need to get in touch with the Youth Participation Project Officer at the Youth Action and Policy Association (YAPA)

WHAT KIND OF ACTIVITIES WILL BE FUNDED?

Any type of activity which benefits the community for young people in some way may be funded, so long as it's run by a group of young people, it's legal, safe, has a wider community benefit, and you can make it happen.

Examples of some possible projects are:

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| sporting events | websites |
| music workshops | youth forums |
| discos | local radio programs |
| film making | competitions |
| recreational programs | outings |
| school based projects | festivals |
| community days | movie nights |
| break dance competitions | artist exhibitions |
| setting up a music studio | band nights |
| drama performances | publications |

Make us an offer, and we'll consider it.

HOW DO I APPLY?

A flexible application process will be used to select projects that will be funded. So, you can use any form of communication you feel comfortable with.

This could include:

a short film
an audio file
a web page
a presentation
a written document

These are just a few possibilities. Applications will be judged on merit by a selection panel based on the aims of the project and how it will help the community.

The only formal document you need to submit will be a budget proposal, and a contact list of group members.

YAPA will even help you with the application if you need extra help!

WHEN DO APPLICATIONS CLOSE?

There will be 2 rounds of grants on offer.

Round 1 - Applications close on
24th April 2008

Round 2 - Applications close on
25th July 2008

If you are interested in applying, ring up the Youth Participation Project Officer at YAPA for an info pack, or check out the YAPA website at

www.yapa.org.au/ypp

HOW TO CREATE A PROJECT?

1. Have ideas about what you want to do.
Get a group together (2 or more people)

2. Talk to the Youth Participation Project worker at YAPA

3. Lodge an application

4. Wait and see if the selection panel decides whether to give you money and if any conditions are necessary.

5. Attend a free information session about project management

6. Do the project

7. Review what you and your group have learnt and report back to YAPA.

Youth Action & Policy Association (NSW) Inc; 146 Devonshire Street, SURRY HILLS NSW 2010
(02) 9319 1100 or 1800 627 323; fax (02) 9319 1144; <http://www.yapa.org.au>

Improved Learning through Consulting Pupils

Pupil consultation can lead to a transformation of teacher-pupil relationships, to significant improvements in teachers' practices, and to pupils having a new sense of themselves as members of a community of learners. In England, pupil involvement is at the heart of current government education policy and is a key dimension of both citizenship education and personalised learning.

Drawing on research carried out as part of the **Teaching and Learning Research Programme**, *Improving Learning through Consulting Pupils* discusses the potential of consultation as a strategy for signalling a more partnership-oriented relationship in teaching and learning. It also examines the challenges of introducing and sustaining consultative practices. Topics covered include:

- the centrality of consultation about teaching and learning in relation to broader school-level concerns;
- teaching approaches that pupils believe help them to learn and those that obstruct their learning;
- teachers' responses to pupil consultation – what they learn from it, the changes they can make to their practice and the difficulties they can face;
- the things that can get in the way of pupils trusting in consultation as something that can make a positive difference.

While consultation is flourishing in many primary schools, the focus here is on secondary schools where the difficulties of introducing and sustaining consultation are often more daunting, but where the benefits of doing so can be substantial. This innovative book will be of interest to all those concerned with improving classroom learning.

Jean Rudduck and **Donald McIntyre** were both Professors of Education at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, UK. Both of them retired in 2004, but continued to work. Sadly, Jean Rudduck died on 28 March 2007, shortly after completing this book, and Donald McIntyre died on 16 October 2007, just before it was published.

Improving Learning through Consulting Pupils is published by Routledge, as part of the **Improving Learning Series**: ISBN 978-0-415-41616-0



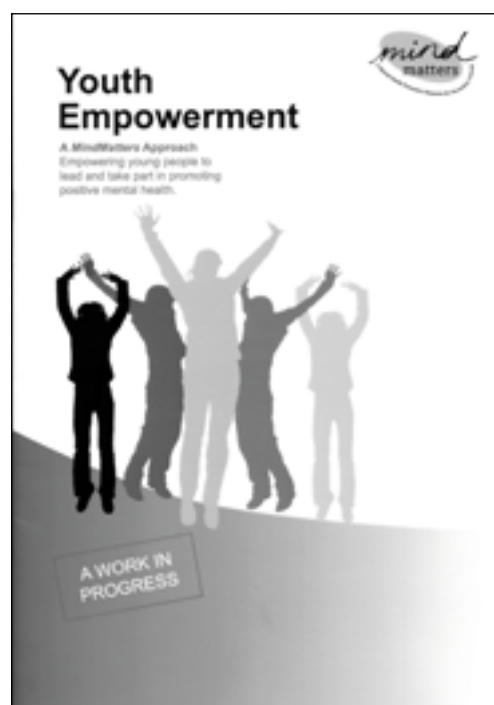
Youth Empowerment: A MindMatters Approach *Empowering young people to lead and take part in promoting positive mental health*

In parallel with the work of the NSW State SRC around *Creating Connections: Student to Student* (see page 17 of this issue of *Connect*), young people with project officer support within *MindMatters* in South Australia (in particular, though examples have developed elsewhere too), have led in the development of a **Youth Empowerment Process (YEP)**.

A guide to this approach has been published for consultation. This provides a context and overview of the work, including a discussion of what is meant by 'youth empowerment', its links to health and to mental health in particular, a summary of the YEP journey, and an outline of the workshops that are offered as part of that process.

The process is located within the broader *MindMatters* Implementation Model for a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, and also within the *MindMatters* Professional Development modules.

The booklet is labelled 'A Work in Progress', with *MindMatters* interested in responses from teachers and others about its contents and use. For further information about its availability, contact Vanessa Houlthby, the *MindMatters* Youth Empowerment Project Officer on 08 8245 9820 or e-mail her on: vanessah@apapdc.edu.au



Clearinghouse

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:

Education Views (Education Queensland, Coorparoo, Qld) Vol 16 Nos 11-16; June-December 2007

FYI (The Foundation for Young Australians, Melbourne, Vic) December 2007

Generations and Social Change (AYRC, University of Melbourne, Vic) Research Report 29; January 2008

Girls @ Work: Getting a Fair Go (YAPA, Surry Hills, NSW) - education kit; 2008

Research Developments (ACER, Camberwell, Vic) No 18; Summer 2007

Social Education: A Statement for Victorian Schools (SEV, Carlton, Vic) 2007

YAPRap (Youth Action and Policy Association, Surry Hills, NSW) Vol 18 Nos 1, 2; January, February 2008

Yikes (YACVic, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 5 Edition 6; Dec 2007

Youth Empowerment (MindMatters, Hindmarsh, SA) Kit: 'A work in progress'

Youth Studies Australia (ACYS, Hobart, Tas) Vol 26 No 4; December 2007

International:

Education Revolution (AERA, New York, USA) Vol 19 No 4 (Issue #51); Winter 2007-08

Improving Learning through Consulting Pupils (Jean Rudduck and Donald McIntyre; Routledge, UK) 2007

Personalised Education Now (Nottingham, UK) Issue 7; Autumn/Winter 2007

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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!

Student Councils and Beyond: Students as Effective Participants in Decision-Making

The first **Connect** publication (from 2005) supports effective and relevant participation of students in decision-making in primary and secondary schools.

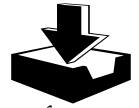
It brings together a collection of practical ideas and articles about how Student Councils can go beyond tokenism ... and make a difference. Case studies, ideas, worksheets!

Order NOW from **Connect**: \$33 or \$27.50 for **Connect** subscribers.

ISBN: 978-0-9803133-1-4



Documents



The documents listed in this column may be of general background interest. A photocopy is available for research purposes. The length and cost (to cover copying and postage) is listed. Please order by code number.

A full, computerised index of these documents is now available from **Connect** for \$3; this can be accessed and printed by topic, key-word etc or simply sequentially.

Code Description/Pages/Cost

- 600 **Personalisation, Education and the Totalitarianism of the Market** (Michael Fielding, Institute of Education, University of London, UK) Paper for *Soundings* (10 pp; \$1.50)

Connect has a website:
<http://www.geocities.com/rogermhold/Connect>

*Slowly growing with information about subscribing, some back issue contents and summaries of **Student Councils and Beyond**, **Student Action Teams** and **Reaching High**.*

Check in occasionally!

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By subscribing at a higher rate, the following have helped keep **Connect** going. We gratefully acknowledge receipt of the following contributions since the last issue of **Connect**:

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• **Cross-referenced index to contents of Connect back issues** (\$3) \$

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• 2005	Student Councils & Beyond (\$33; \$27.50 for <i>Connect</i> subscribers)	\$
• 2006	Student Action Teams (\$33; \$27.50 for <i>Connect</i> subscribers)	\$
• 2006-7	Reaching High (\$33; \$27.50 for <i>Connect</i> subscribers)	\$
• 1996	Democracy Starts Here! Junior School Councils at Work <i>Case studies of Primary School SRCs</i> (\$6.60 or \$11 for two copies)	\$

Foxfire Publications:

- **Sometimes a Shining Moment** (Wigginton) (\$22) \$
- **Foxfire: 25 Years** (Doubleday) (\$22) \$

Documents

- **Photocopies of the following documents:** \$
- **Cross-referenced Index to photocopies of documents** (\$3) \$

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