
PASTA NEWSLETTER

48 - June 2006

PASTA is the acronym of the Professional Association of Student Representative Council Teacher/Advisors. Founded in New South Wales, Australia, in February 1995, our Association exists to support in whatever ways possible those who work with and support programs of student participation, representation and leadership.



SEE OUR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION AND APPLICATION FORM ON THE WEBSITE

PASS THE PASTA

As we prepared our ninth successive group of student and adviser delegates to participate in this year's North American leadership tour experience (15 June - 20 July 2006), it came as a surprise to hear that some student leadership advisers and educational administrators not only feel that these international tours are a waste of time and money, but made those feelings known to students. This in spite of the glowing reports we have received over the years from parents, Principals and the schools of those students who have been involved. It is a sad commentary on those who are so negative about something they have never experienced themselves.

It is also interesting to note that, while there is this negativity from some, the NSW State Conference Working Party has regularly integrated a number of the ideas and skills learnt overseas into their annual Conference program. This has had a flow-on effect of course, so that now a number of Districts and schools do likewise. We trust our transfer of some of these extensive materials in various editions of *Connect* over the past decade has also been of value to those in other states and territories.

To those who are critical of this unique initiative (or its spin-off, ISRC), we say: investigate, acknowledge and help to disseminate the professional development, resource acquisition and networking opportunities these activities have provided for a decade and, with more widespread and heartfelt support, could continue to provide to Australia well into the future.

On a more positive note, this year's tour will visit the World Trade Centre site in New York; Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia; the American Civil War battlefield sites of Antietam and Gettysburg in Maryland; and an indigenous American reservation in Iowa. They will

also be part of the 70th NASC Conference, hosted by North Penn HS in Pennsylvania, an inspiring and comprehensive five-day event attended by some 2000 students and 500 teachers. As also happens each year, Australian delegates immerse themselves in a six-day leadership skills camp, an educational experience which nearly all previous delegates have said was the best personal well-being education they had ever received.



For a more studied outline of the skills, benefits and outcomes from these overseas activities, see the main article that follows within this issue of the *PASTA Newsletter*. It is a condensation of much more extensive documentation on tap should those with open minds and a willingness to read through them take the opportunity that has always been there to ask for them.

For what? Well, for the motivation and skilling of advisers as well as of our student leaders. For the awareness of the hands-on, in-depth, diverse educational experiences overseas delegates undergo in ways not otherwise available here. For the sharing of the knowledge and the joy and the personal growth and the friendship circles that come from living within many families, being part of many teams.

The greatest reward for those who work within their schools in any endeavour should be the chance to represent their country. Few question the benefits and the deserved publicity given to those students who get the chance to represent their country in sporting or performing arts endeavours. Why then is leadership treated differently different?

Ken Page
PASTA President



So What Have We Learnt?

The following is an overview of some of the skills, benefits and outcomes of SRCs and Student Leadership, Representation and Participation activities as experienced and brought back home through PASTA's International Networking and its SRC Leadership Tours. It is relevant to: SRC, Student Leadership Teams, School Captains and Prefects, Student Bodies, Staff and Consultants, Year and Career Advisers and Counsellors, Civics and Citizenship and all KLA Curriculums, Members of Parliament and Local Councillors, Parents and Community Members, Employers, The Media.

Opportunities for the Taking

Opportunities to develop student leadership, representation and participation in an active, sustained, accredited and professional way are not something most people think of when they first think of schools in Australia. Yet, in terms of self-confident, positively active citizens in a democracy, they are as important as all the other many things our schools do. They are also measurable. Achievable. Worth taking that 'extra measure of devotion' to implement. Worth providing international opportunities to highlight and reward.

Teaching Leadership, Representation and Participation

There are many different ways the curriculum of student leadership and representation can be taught. It is the view of many advisers and consultants who work in this field, including the Professional Association of SRC Teacher/Advisers (PASTA), that **regular school level training is essential for the success and maintenance of the SRC and related programs over time.** Only part of that is achieved, if at all, through current such activities in most Australian schools.

Without some combination of these school-generated efforts, no number or quality of district, state, national or, indeed, international such attempts will substantially improve, much less sustain, the quality of a local school's student leadership and decision-making efforts. To be truly effective, these need to be scheduled on the yearly calendar (planned in consultation with the school's student representative body), supported financially and through timetabled SRC time for students and advisers, and accredited (nationally as well as locally). They also need things to aim for 'beyond the boundaries'.

Leadership conferences and camps which bring together students and advisers from different schools do provide unique opportunities: for personal growth, for advanced skills training, for the acquisition of resources and the establishment of networking opportunities. With support and recognition to these representatives from their schools and communities, additional international curriculum initiatives give the rest global significance and added value. They should be encouraged:

- By those within the education sector 'out there' who still negatively criticise or simply ignore these

opportunities. If it's good enough for sports (and few will deny the kudos Australian educational/cultural circles lavish on international representation in that field) then, surely, encouraging student leadership achievement at the global level must also be valued.

- PASTA's Overseas SRC Leadership Tours develop sound educational skills, bring back valuable resources and provide a well-established international focus to which all district, state and national initiatives can ultimately lead. Over two decades of active personal and association links with key student leadership organisations in North America should not just be ignored here.
- The International Student Representative Conferences (ISRC Sydney 2000 and Edmonton 2004) embraced the themes of *SRCs - Building A Better Today* and *Thinking Globally, Acting Locally*. ISRC 2008 (scheduled for the North Eastern USA in the northern summer) will likewise focus on recommendations and actions to tackle universal needs. This concept was an Australian initiative.

SRC Leadership Tours and the School Curriculum

It has been in the past and still remains possible with each overseas tour to view the educational scope of it in terms of opportunities provided to explore aspects of all "Key Learning Areas". Plus some we don't often think about but are part of what should be recognised and resourced as the '**Student Leadership Key Learning Area**'. The wider implications that has for the relevance of SRC and related participation activities in our schools is hard to ignore. Amongst the many, its relevance to the currently largely theory based Civics and Citizenship Curriculum (and associated state wide examinations) should be paramount.

- Part 1 of a larger article (available from PASTA since the 4th Tour in 2001) introduces the tour curriculum concept and lists some of **the many knowledge, skills and positive attitudes that these tours, ISRC and linked effective SRC programs in schools can develop.**
- Part 2 looks at a previous tour (2001) as an illustration of one form of analysing student leadership experiences abroad - and how **these opportunities - and SRCs generally - can actively support key learning areas,**

inspire worthy school projects and enhance a broad range of skills.

- Part 3 revisits the itinerary of a subsequent Tour (2003). Unlike when first sent to delegate schools merely as advance information on their representatives' whereabouts, it looks at **how these experiences engaged students with aspects of all curriculums and skills for life eg experiential awareness of .../ knowledge of .../development of positive attitudes towards .../personal understanding of .../skills in .../appreciation for .../personal development of .../enhancement of abilities to .../evaluation of and undertaking action research in ...** capped off by **'The will to do great things with who they now are.'**

International Activities

Enhance Australian Skills

Student Leadership conferences and camps, in both Canada and the USA, are held throughout the northern summer. Some are national, some state or region based. One vital difference to Australia is that, in both those countries, there exists a well-established national student leadership body linked directly to National Principals' Associations. While coordinated by a state or national body, each conference is hosted by a school or district. Its student council and administration bid for it years in advance. Planning and implementation is a long-term project for students and staff of that school and involves the community.

Local schools also regularly run such leadership training experiences themselves. Many also sustain student council courses - for credit. Students therefore value the opportunity and the privilege to represent their school and community and state at a higher level. The high-profile state and national events are predicated on sound foundations. **They are an extension of the school curriculum.**

Student and adviser delegates on PASTA's Overseas SRC Leadership Tours have now for nearly a decade found these national northern summer activities of great benefit to them personally as well as providing **enormous amounts of material resources, collegial contacts, ideas and leadership skills for use back home.** While the conferences are high on motivation, spirit building, community service projects, student presented workshops, and networking, the camps are designed to **explore leadership skills, group dynamics and personal strengths in a more intensely personal and reflective way.**

In addition, each new tour provides a wide-ranging educational menu - for most of the time generously provided by local school student councils - of geographical, historical, scientific and cultural aspects of different parts of the vast and varied North American continent. It is this indulgent but in-depth look at other country's views of their own place and time that distinguishes this tour from a mere 'holiday' abroad.

Such learning experiences go far beyond simply a tourist's look at a foreign place. From undertaking designated and nationally highly regarded educational activities through living with several different host families to being bound together for a month as a team representing their country, student and adviser delegates alike are genuinely justified in speaking so positively about it, which they usually do with even greater passion and sense of long-term significance years after their return. A typical comment follows.

"No words, no matter how poetic, can adequately describe my month long experience. But I can say that, almost five years on, it still burns inside me: the inspiration, the courage, the things I learnt about myself. They will never leave. They will stay with me everyday." (Lana White, 1999 Tour, ex-Greystanes HS)

PASTA MEMBERSHIP

Tax Invoice: ABN 49 398 096 539

PASTA membership gets you a full year of regular publications, access to resource modules and professional development opportunities, while at the same time showing your real support for our main job of lobbying for more time, training, resources and recognition for SRCs and advisors.

A full membership form is on our Website's 'How To Join' page at:

<http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

For now, just complete the details below and send your payment to:

**The Secretary, PASTA
50 Balmoral Drive
Gorokan, NSW 2263**

NAME: _____

CONTACT DETAILS: _____

TYPE (inc. GST):

- Student/Concession (\$27.50)
 Ordinary (\$55.00)
 Organisation (\$88.00)

(indicate which)

**Applications open now
for PASTA Overseas SRC
Leadership Tours 2007 and
the 3rd ISRC Tour in 2008.
Contact the PASTA Secretary
as below.**

Check out 'How To Join' page on our Website:

<http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

or contact the PASTA Secretary: esheerin@ozemail.com.au

EFFECTIVE MEETINGS – PART 3

In the February 2006 issue we provided some general principles, hints on planning and effectiveness, and a checklist of details not to be overlooked. In April's second segment we listed some responsibilities of officers and some alternatives to formal parliamentary procedures. Others follow in this third instalment.

In the August issue we will begin to address the 'vexed' issue of educating students to become familiar and comfortable using parliamentary procedures. It is 'vexed' when it bogs down. It bogs down largely because:

1. students find the jargon difficult; and
2. they fail to see the reason for it.

National (or State) parliaments aside - wherein political grand-standing often leads to verbose speeches or obtuse rule interpretations - it fails in less formal groupings when people do not appreciate that it can be a very effective way of reaching decisions. Meanwhile, if your group is still not ready for that, add these to your stock of alternative procedures.

Cooperative Investigations

The procedure for this type of group is more formal, as its purpose is more sharply focused. It is designed for situations in which group members have little information about the topic, and no expert is available to lecture on what they need to know. There are usually eight steps to this 'do it yourself' exercise.

1. The group meets in advance to elect a leader and to divide the subject into a number of subtopics.
2. So that members can know what each has accomplished, the leader calls one or more advance meetings to review assignments and make final plans.
3. At the beginning of the discussion meeting, the leader analyses and defines the problem.
4. Each member then presents his or her information in a brief report. The report contains only information, no argument.
5. When the reports are finished, the leader calls for any additional information.
6. The leader concludes the first portion of the meeting by summarising the fresh pool of information, and then opens the second half by inviting discussion in light of the facts presented.
7. Finally, if the nature of the problem permits, ways and means for putting an agreed upon solution into operation are discussed.
8. At the conclusion of the discussion, the leader may want to summarise the points of agreement, identify any problems that still need attention, and evaluate the process by which the group reached its understanding.

House Rules

Using house rules is an informal way to structure a meeting. House rules are usually five to twenty rules of courtesy and procedure that are determined by the group for its own use. This method provides a simple, flexible framework for groups whose members want an alternative to strict parliamentary procedure.

House rules usually cover the following areas:

- How will decisions be reached?
- Who makes them?
- How will ideas be presented?
- When?
- How many?
- How will ideas be changed?
- How will information be obtained?

Lecture Presentation

The main purpose of lectures and presentations is information sharing. Information is given, but there should be no judgment made on the material. Information is provided by qualified speakers well-versed in the lecture topic. The speakers give their prepared remarks to the audience with little interaction from the rest of the group. After the lecture, an open forum on the topic is usually provided.

Open Forum

An open forum provides the chance for each group member to express an opinion on a topic. The right to speak is available to all members of the group; prepared or impromptu comments may be freely expressed. This information sharing method lends itself to discussion of material from a movie, speech, or presentation. Order must be maintained and members are recognised by the leader in order to ensure that the forum process continues.

**The PASTA Newsletter is edited by
Ken Page and distributed
bi-monthly as a supplement
to *Connect* magazine.**

<http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>