

In 2002, the Tasmanian Department of Education, as part of its commitment to a whole of government agenda for community development and life-long learning, funded 20 schools to undertake innovative action research projects to build partnerships between schools and communities.

**Professor Pat Thomson**, now Professor of Education at The University of Nottingham (UK) was employed as a consultant to the program. She ran two full-day action research workshops with teachers and a day for reporting work-in-progress.

The following four stories are drawn from notes that Pat made during the work-in-progress conference at which teachers from the schools presented their work and answered questions. Pat notes that there were also other success stories from these schools: for example, students in one of the other funded projects intervened in the 'death trajectory' of an endangered bird species.

These stories are reprinted, with the author's permission, from a longer analytical article: *'Miners, diggers, ferals and show-men: school-community projects that affirm and unsettle identities and place?'* in the **British Journal of Sociology of Education**, Vol 27 No 1, February 2006: 81-96

*Note: Each location has been semi-anonymised.*

# Miners, diggers, ferals and show-men

## Show-men

Papermill is a regional city whose major industry is the subject of sporadic state and national protest. Trucks laden with old-forest logs wheel into town, and container loads of paper products for domestic use and export wheel out. Most days Papermill is a sleepy place with an aging population, many of whose male members enjoy social time together in the colonial pubs in the main street. Papermill is also an important regional centre for outlying farms that rely on the sales of dairy products and wool.

Papermill District High School struggles to cater for its diverse range of students, some of whom intend to study at mainland universities, while others simply see that there is no work for them and no point to school.

In 2002, local media carried the story that Papermill's annual Agricultural Show was dying. The Show committee, made up of the town's senior men, were convinced that 2002 would be its last year. But one of the teachers at the local High School had other ideas. She applied for 'community' funds to allow her class – the school's most unsuccessful and 'difficult' students, the 'vegies' as they were disparagingly called by many of the staff – to repair the fencing and animal pens at the Showground. She equipped a trailer as a mobile workshop. She contacted the local committee and the aged show-

men agreed, somewhat reluctantly, to work with her boys. They were far from convinced that the town's young trouble-makers – interested, as far as they could see, only in loud music, fast cars and late-night drinking – were up to the task.

Because the show-men were too infirm to tackle hard physical work, and because they came from the 'old school', their mode of working with the boys was far from gentle. Yet the boys not only accepted having orders barked at them, they also worked hard and established friendly and respectful relationships with men who they previously would have dismissed with a string of four letter epithets. The show-men, for their part, rapidly grew to like and respect the boys. The show ground was repaired.

After further discussion about the gloomy prospects for the Show, the boys developed a publicity strategy that involved designing, printing and distributing leaflets far and wide. They worked with their peers at school on a school display and stalls, and they were the backbone of a team of school volunteers who worked before, during and after the actual Show. Headlines in the local paper the day after the Show attributed the first profitable event for many years directly to the efforts of the class.

The class did not stop there. They began work with the local police, previously their sworn enemy, to repair and repaint public toilets and the local youth club.

## Diggers

Barracks Street, in suburban Hobart, is one of the oldest primary schools in Australia. Built in the early 1800s, it is situated in a now gentrifying lower-middle-class neighbourhood of weatherboard and redbrick Victorian cottages and bungalows. It is a quiet, largely monocultural area. The once stable population has become more mobile, but there are still many children whose parents and grandparents attended the school. Barracks Street counts several notable Tasmanians amongst its ex-pupils.

Two upper primary teachers decided to apply for 'community' funds to build a school history website. They wanted to bring the study of history literally to life by researching local knowledges. They believed that, through using the school and the neighbourhood as the focus for inquiry, they would have one lens on colonial Tasmania. They began with their classes designing and distributing leaflets for two community meetings. These meetings were very well attended and were addressed by a nationally recognised artist old-scholar. The students had developed questionnaires for all those present. They requested photographs and other artefacts and received quite a few.

The class then did library work using histories of Tasmania as well as the school's own archives to develop a social-school timeline into which they slotted the photographs, questionnaire data and interviews. With the help of their teachers they designed a website, and the quest for further information from ex-students went digital. Over time, large numbers of former Barracks Street students responded to their on-line presence and they became part of the cyber-archive.

For the next phase, the teachers decided to work with a school Honour Board hung in the main foyer: this listed former students who died in the First World War. Grandparents were invited in to talk about their childhood memories of war time, and when they were at school, and these presentations were digitally recorded and added to the archive. The teachers contacted the historian at the State War Memorial and the students went on an excursion to the official archives, where they were helped by the historian and library staff to research one soldier each. Every student was able to see the records of 'their' soldier, and to investigate the particular circumstances of his death. They had access to a range of documents, including those that constructed the national mythologies of the ANZAC, noble diggers and Gallipoli. They were encouraged to look at the differences between documentary photographs taken at the time and artistic post-hoc representations.

On Remembrance Day in 2002, the students attended the annual Dawn Service and placed flowers at the foot of their soldier's tree.

## Miners

Rocktown is located in a relatively remote part of Tasmania adjacent to a significant wilderness area and is the site of a major internationally owned mine. The mine has been the subject of state and national protest and scrutiny. It is surrounded by high mesh fences and heavy security procedures. Most of the children in the local Primary School are from families whose livelihood is based in local small businesses, tourism and farming. Like many of their parents, the bulk of students is interested in environmental issues and is overtly committed to a 'clean green Tasmania'.

A primary teacher decided to apply for 'community' funds so that her class could restore a patch of native bush that was badly degraded by introduced plants. The plan was to build an interpretive area, which the children named, in anticipation of its outcome, Wallaby Wander. The children researched the local vegetation and worked with the local Council and Parks and Wildlife officers to plot what to plant and what to remove. They designed a snaking pathway and grew tiny seedlings from seed collected from their patch of scrub.

They did not, however, have enough money in the grant, or enough labour, to do what they wanted. So, together with their teacher, they began to contact local businesses. A local earthmover donated his services. Another business loaned bins for the collection of rubbish. Many school parents and community members volunteered time for working bees. A local landscaper offered substantial discount on gravel and sand for the path.

## Ferals

But the teacher was determined to get something from the biggest employer in town – the mine. She talked her way into the office of the Director who, like many of the mine's workers, was from out of town. The Director was shocked that the teacher had not been sent to the public relations manager who usually dealt with requests for donations, but was convinced, as she listened to the teacher explain the Wallaby Wander project, that there were things that the mine could do. She organised for the children to meet employees responsible for land restoration, now a legislative requirement on all mining ventures in Tasmania. The children were then invited behind the security fences to join environmental staff replanting an area of land with endangered plants, known as RATS: rare and threatened species. They were also given a quantity of RATS for Wallaby Wander.

The class managed a mass tree-planting day involving 300 children and adults to coincide with a national conservation day. This event garnered considerable publicity for Wallaby Wander. The students' class record of this part of the project comprised diaries, stories, student-produced newsletters and press articles, and it was awarded a state literacy prize.

Finally, one weekend in late 2002, and with the participation of large numbers of helpers, the pathway was finally laid. Wallaby Wander was officially launched in early 2003.

Gumville is an old logging and forestry community. Since the protests of the 1980s, it has also been home to a substantial alternative-lifestyle community, known locally as 'the ferals'. The local Primary and High School cater largely for children of timber and farming families who vote overwhelmingly conservative in state and national elections. There is also a significant arts community in the area and some commercial art and craft outlets catering for the passing tourist trade.

An upper primary teacher applied for 'community' funds to mount a class art exhibition that would involve local artists presenting their work alongside that of students. The class wrote to all of the local artists inviting them to participate, and a handful responded. Other staff and their classes in the school were excited by the project and they asked if they could join in. Before they knew what was happening, the class was organising a whole school art exhibition. But, disappointed with the response from local artists, most of whom had not bothered to answer the children's letters, the teacher decided that she would begin to solicit assistance from local businesses. Many responded in the affirmative, offering assistance with catering and display supplies.

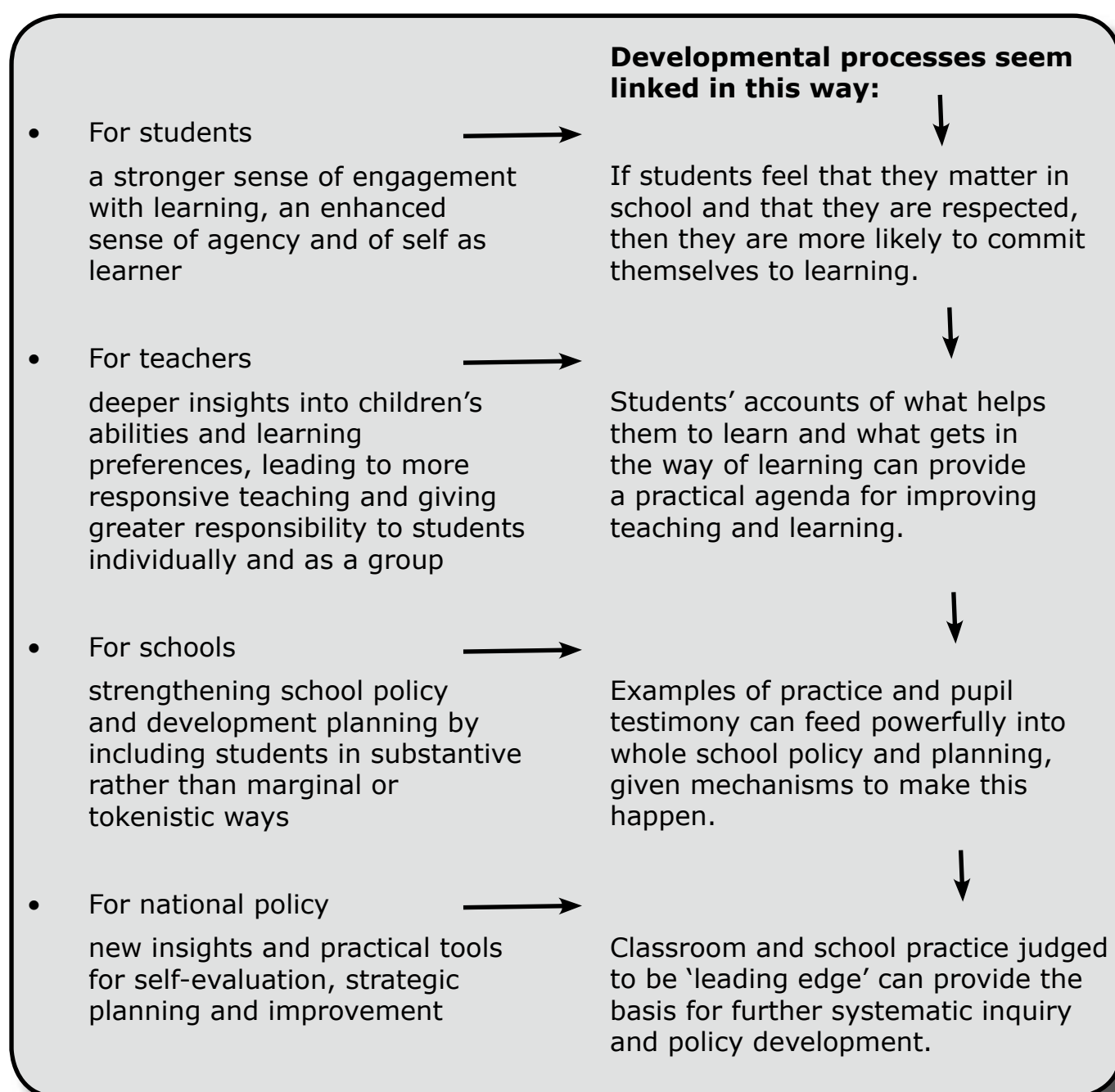
As the time for the exhibition drew nearer, the teacher decided that she would approach the local environment centre to see what they could do to help because it seemed foolish to keep ignoring them just because they were 'the ferals'. About the same time, she discovered that the local High School was organising an exhibition of their own, just one week before the Primary School, despite being invited to join together. The High School did, however, provide some student art work to display in the Primary event. While this lack of coordination/cooperation with the High School was very disappointing, the connection with 'the ferals' was surprisingly positive. The young people from the environment centre offered workshops on paper-making and other art and craft practices. They also provided some of their own art and craft for the exhibition. The children were able to mount an exhibition of some 700 artefacts, of which 500 were from children in the school and 200 from the community. The exhibition was opened by the Mayor and was relatively well attended.

In 2003, the teacher established an on-going series of activities with the environmental centre and initiated a transition program with the High School.

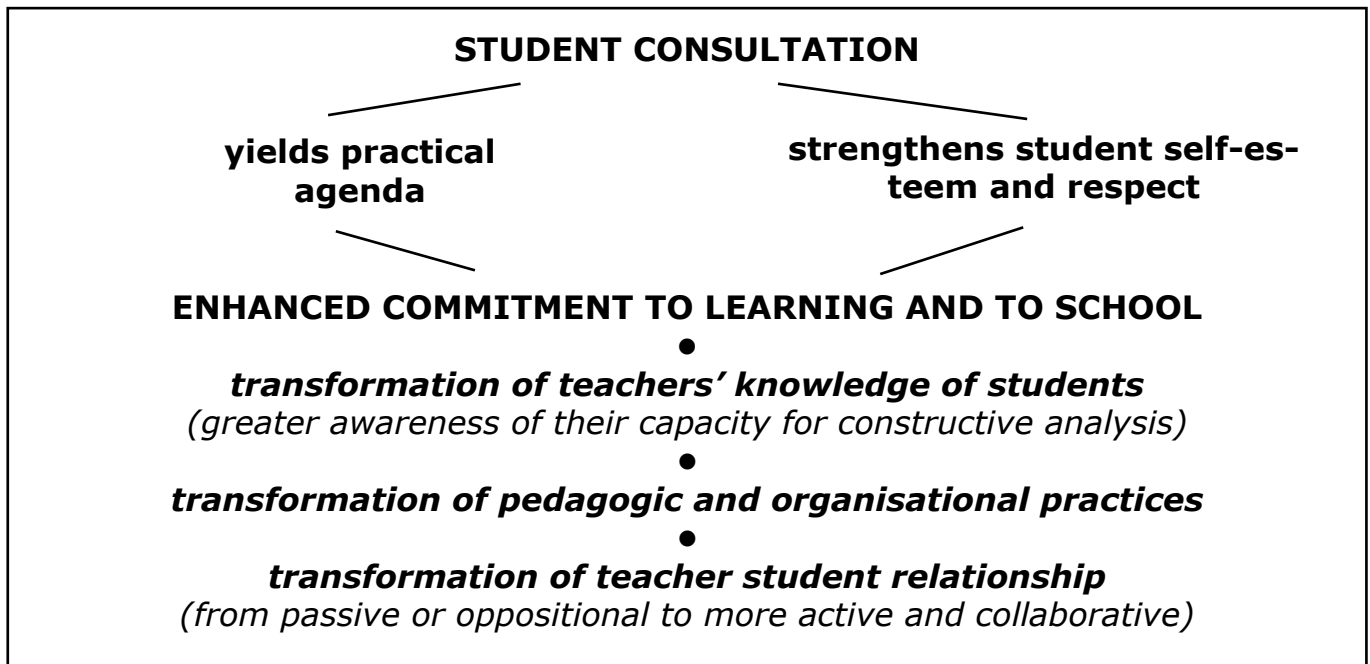
*For further information, contact Professor Pat Thomson on:  
Patricia.Thomson@nottingham.ac.uk*

# Consulting Students about Teaching and Learning

There is a growing recognition that young people have a right to be heard and have something worthwhile to say about their school experiences. Policy-makers internationally are thinking differently - and urgently - about the contribution of young people to today's and tomorrow's world. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) included children's rights to be heard as one of its four basic principles. It is seen as integral to the citizenship curriculum and lifelong learning. How to listen and learn, as well as to teach and lead, is the challenge for teachers, schools and their communities.



# From consultation to transformation:



## Some cautions

The potential for consulting students is considerable, but can fail to make a real difference because of ingrained habits of 'hearing' what students have to say. Students, for their part, often expect **not** to be heard. Breaking these habits requires not only new ways of listening but conditions and support for that to take place. It is important, therefore, to be alive to the following issues:

**Hearing the quiet voice in the acoustic of the school:** Listening only to the strident or articulate voices risks disenfranchising others.

**Avoiding the creation of a 'student voice elite':** Any pioneering group can easily become a new elite and create new hierarchies within the student group.

**Maintaining authenticity:** Students tire of invitations (a) to express a view on matters they do not think are important, (b) that are framed in a language they find alienating or patronising, and (c) that seldom result in actions that affect the quality of their lives in school.

**Sharing data and/or offering feedback to students:** Students need to know what is happening as a result of what they have said, what is possible and what is not possible, given diverse perspectives and external pressures.

**Trust and openness as a pre-condition of dialogue and action:** This requires a framework that legitimates comment and provides reassurance that ideas will be welcome and not simply 'accommodated' so as not to disturb existing orthodoxy.

## The Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning Research Project

This information is drawn from *Teaching and Learning Research Briefing* Number 5, June 2005 and was written by members of the University of Cambridge research team.

### Project Publications:

- 13 **Project Newsletters** (many items by teachers)
- **Numerous articles** in academic and professional journals by teams members and teachers
- **Two special issues on Pupil Voice:**  
Fielding, M (ed) (2001) *Forum* 43, 2  
Rudduck, J (ed) (2006) *Educational Review*
- **Six books:**  
**A practitioner-friendly series from Pearson Publishing, Cambridge:**  
MacBeath, J., Demetriou, H., Rudduck, J. and Myers, K. (2003) *Consulting Pupils: A Toolkit for Teachers*  
Fielding, M. and Bragg, S. (2003) *Students as Researchers: Making a Difference*  
Arnot, M., McIntyre, D., Pedder, D. and Reay, D. (2003) *Consultation in the Classroom*  
**And three others:**  
Rudduck, J. and Flutter, J. (2001) *How to Improve Your School: Giving Pupils a Voice*, Continuum  
Flutter, J. and Rudduck, J. (2004) *Consulting Pupils: What's in it for Schools?*, RoutledgeFalmer  
Rudduck, J. and McIntyre, D. (2006) *Improving Learning*, RoutledgeFalmer Gateways series
- **Three linked books:**  
MacBeath, J. and Sugimine, H. (eds) (2003) *Self-evaluation in the Global Classroom*, Routledge  
Rudduck, J. and Flutter, J. (2004) *The Challenge of Year 8: Sustaining a Commitment to Learning*, Pearson  
Finney, J., Hickman, R., Morrison, M., Nicholl, B. and Rudduck, J. (2005) *Rebuilding Engagement through the Arts*, Pearson

For more information:

**[www.consultingpupils.co.uk](http://www.consultingpupils.co.uk)**

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# News and Reviews

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## Student Representation on School Boards of Trustees in New Zealand

Under the New Zealand Education Act 1989, secondary schools are required to have a student representative on the Board of Trustees. The student representative is elected by students from the school for a period of one year and is responsible for representing student views at the governance level of the Board of Trustees. The Education Amendment Act 2000 removed the option for Boards **not** to have a student representative. (*Education Amendment Act 2000: Section 94 Constitution of Boards of State Schools; Section 101 election of Trustees; as cited in Education Review Office (Te Tari Arotake Matauranga) (April 2003): 'Student Participation in School Decision-Making'* at:

[www.ero.govt.nz/nav/maincontent.htm](http://www.ero.govt.nz/nav/maincontent.htm)



## Continuing to Inspire: MAD Day 2006

Across Australia, 88 schools declared the 6th April as MAD Day, and challenged students to 'Make A Difference'. MAD Day was launched at Southmoor Primary School in Moorabbin, Victoria, with the theme of demonstrating an environmental sustainability approach to schools, and showing all present that learning about sustainability can be a lot of fun!

More than 265 students from **Southmoor Primary School**, **Myrree Primary School** and **Sandringham Secondary College** participated in a range of environmental activities. These included a no-dig garden, wine making, pickle and jam making, making wind chimes, sand sculpture, paper making, producing environmentally friendly cleaning agents, sculpture making and a circus workshop.

Other MAD Day activities included:

- **Murtoa College** in Victoria organised and catered for a whole school healthy breakfast and a special assembly. The students organised rosters and promoted the event that aimed to encourage fun participation.
- **Fremantle Primary** in Western Australia hosted speakers who talked about eco-friendly businesses, how to protect the beaches, as well as other environmental issues affecting their community. Afternoon activities included visits to an old people's home and the local hospital, the establishment of a permaculture patch, the painting of a whale mural, and the establishment of a school worm farm.
- **Bellbird Primary** in New South Wales had a 'happy day' looking at bullying and social isolation. Students worked to promote happy feelings, smiles, cooperation and inclusion of everyone. This was achieved through simple activities like 'smiley games' awards, stickers and making 'happy biscuits' to distribute within the school.

**ruMaD** continues to inspire and challenge students in schools across Australia. Please contact **ruMaD Coordinator Adrian Bertolini** to speak further about how your school, workplace or community can be involved in the **ruMaD** program. Phone 03 9665 5904, or e-mail:

[adrian@educationfoundation.org.au](mailto:adrian@educationfoundation.org.au)

*From Education Foundation eNews Issue 2: May 2006  
[www.educationfoundation.org.au](http://www.educationfoundation.org.au)*

**Student Participation Support Materials**

**NOW AVAILABLE THROUGH CONNECT**

**See the back page of this issue of Connect for listings and order form**

# IDEC in Sydney, July 2006



*This is an important international conference, being held for the first time in Australia. All those with an interest in democratic and participatory education - particularly students from schools throughout Australia - are warmly invited to take part.*

*The program for the Conference is available on the Conference website, and includes a presentation from four young people from the NSW Commission on Children on Young People of a session on "Participating in Decision-making" on Friday 14th July.*

***Students, teachers, administrators, consultants, parents - all those interested in democratic education - are invited to the:***

**International Democratic  
Education Conference  
IDEC 2006**

**10-16 July 2006**

***St Ignatius College  
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**Full week live-in rates available including accommodation and registration;  
or 1-day and 2-day rates -  
with and without accommodation**

**Information:  
[www.idec2006.org](http://www.idec2006.org)**

**Contact: [enquiries@idec2006.org](mailto:enquiries@idec2006.org)**

IDEC2006 is organised by The **Australasian Association for Progressive and Alternative Education (AAPAE)**. This is an Australian organisation for all those interested and involved in progressive, alternative and democratic education. It is for learners and educators, regardless of age. It is for all in the community who wish to share and extend their experience and knowledge of such education. Those working in AAPAE are deeply interested in building the capacity and passion of individuals and helping develop a community and society of citizens able and willing to actively participate in creating healthier, more equitable and sustainable societies, people skilled in and committed to participating in democratic processes.

**[www.aapae.edu.au](http://www.aapae.edu.au)**



# Active Citizenship Education and Pupil Participation

## The ACT and ESSA Annual Conference 06: Student Voice Conference 06

The Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT) and the English Secondary Students' Association (ESSA) are holding their joint Annual Conference in London (Barbican Centre, Silk Street - followed by an evening reception at the National Portrait Gallery) on Friday 30th June. These organisations exist to support teachers, participation workers and students. This national conference is supported and funded by the UK Department for Education and Skills, the Carnegie UK Trust, the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and the Electoral Commission, and will enable participants to learn how to ensure effective citizenship education and pupil participation in their schools.

The conference is free for students and provides a contribution towards travel for students from outside London.

The conference is about student participation in action. Teachers and students will work together for parts of the day. All teachers attending must bring one or two students and all young people must be accompanied by an adult.

### ACT

The Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT) champions the teaching of Citizenship to all young people. ACT offers direct support to classroom practitioners and connects members to local and national networks. ACT promotes the exchange of good practice, skills and resources, enabling members to become more informed, knowledgeable and confident Citizenship teachers.



### ESSA

The English Secondary Students Association (ESSA) is a youth-led organisation that is working to become the representative body for secondary students aged 11-19 in England. ESSA supports students to become more involved in their own schools and provides a national vote for students on education matters. ESSA's website is:

[www.studentvoice.co.uk](http://www.studentvoice.co.uk)

For more information about the Conference and these groups, visit:

[www.tcp-events.co.uk/citizenshipconference](http://www.tcp-events.co.uk/citizenshipconference)

## What's Changed? & Participation Works: Participation Outcomes

The success of participation activity must be measured by the changes that have resulted on specific issues and concerns raised by children and young people.

What's Changed provides a tool for mapping the impact of young people's participation activity - it seeks evidence of listening, planning and change resulting from children and young people's participation. It can be used to plan participation activity and supervision, as well as to record successful outcomes.

The tool can be found at:

[www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk)

then follow links to Programmes/Active Involvement/What's Changed and also to the useful 'Participation Works' site:

[www.participationworks.org.uk](http://www.participationworks.org.uk)

## 'Student Councils & Beyond'

and

## 'Student Action Teams'

*Vital resource manuals drawn from 15 years of provocative and practical Connect articles, and from current practices in primary and secondary schools!*

**Limited number of copies left - order now!**

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# 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 Foundation eNews** (Education Foundation, Melbourne, Vic) Issue 2, May 2006

**Education Views** (Queensland Department of Education and the Arts) Vol 15 Nos 6-10 (March-June, 2006)

**I Don't Feel So Good** (Mill Park Secondary College and Northern Division of General Practice - Melbourne, Vic) DVD and booklet

**Yikes!** (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 4 Edition 8, June 2006

### International:

**Bolton's Future Search** (Bolton, UK) Report and DVD 2005

**Education Revolution** (AERO, New York, USA) Issue 44, Spring 2006

**Key Stage One: Participation and School Councils Toolkit** (School Councils UK, London; Di Clay; 2005)

**School Councils for All** (School Councils UK, London) Including disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs

**School Council Handbook for Primary Pupils/for Secondary Students** (School Councils UK, London)

**Teaching and Learning Research Briefing** (TLRP, UK) Number 5: Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning; June 2005

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

**Check in occasionally!**



## 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

- 580 **Student Participation in Decision-Making** (Education Review Office, New Zealand; April 2003) (12 pp; \$1.20)
- 581 **Involving Young People: Documenting Youth Participation Strategies for Newly Arrived Communities** (Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, Carlton, Vic; October 2001) (24 pp; \$2.40)
- 582 **Five Uneasy Pieces: Schools, Students, Voice, Action and Community** (Roger Holdsworth; May 2006; keynote at Pupil Voice Conference, Nottingham, UK) (23 pp; \$2.30)
- 583 **Curriculum Briefing: Partners in learning: engaging students** (Optimus Publishing, London, UK) (2 pp; \$0.50)
- 584 **Hearing Children's Voices in Education** (Martin Roberts, Sands School, UK) (6 pp; \$1.00)
- 585 **Go Spatial, Go Relational! Why listening to children's voices is not sufficient when researching child-adult becomings** (Greg Mannion, University of Stirling; May 2006) (20 pp; \$2.00)
- 586 **Researching students: voices and processes in a school evaluation** (Pat Thomson and Helen Gunter; University of Nottingham, UK; *British Education Research Journal*) (18 pp; \$1.80)
- 587 **Miners, differs, ferals and show-men: school-community projects that affirm and unsettle identities and place?** (Pat Thomson, University of Nottingham, UK; *British Journal of Sociology in Education*, Vol 27 No 1, February 2006: 81-96) (16 pp; \$1.60)
- 588 **Pupil Voice and Participation: pleasures, promises and pitfalls** (University of Nottingham; May 22-23, 2006) Conference Program (4 pp; \$0.80)
- 589 **Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning** (Teaching and Learning Research Brief No 5; TLRP, UK) (4 pp; \$0.80)

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**Miscellaneous Resources:**

- **2005! Student Councils & Beyond** (\$30; \$25 for *Connect* subscribers) \$ .....
- **NEW! Student Action Teams** (\$30; \$25 for *Connect* subscribers) \$ .....
- **Democracy Starts Here! Junior School Councils at Work** (1996)  
Case studies of Primary School SRCs (\$7 or \$12 for two copies) \$ .....
- **Students and Work** - 1985 *Connect* reprint booklet #5 (\$5) \$ .....
- **Youth Radio Cram Guide** - 1985 (\$1 - or FREE with any other order) \$ .....

**Foxfire Resources:**

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

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