

Connect

supporting
student
participation

Number 238
August 2019

ABN: 98 174 663 341
ISSN 2202-4980



Students advocating about curriculum change

- Learning walk ... improving our Student Council
St Patrick's School, Lilydale
- Groovie Smoothies
Northern Suburban College
- Student voice: Middle and Later Years campus
Merriang SDS
- Taking control, and the power of choice
Bundoora Secondary College
- SIGs: A simple way to improve our schools
- VicSRC: Congress 2019: 2019-2020 Priorities
ALTER Workshops for primary schools
VicSRC Student Voice Awards
Student Voice Hub: Statement of Student Rights
Student Members & Executive elections

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- Victorian Students' Parliamentary Program: Secondary
- ACSA 2019 Curriculum Conference
- National DRANZSEN Forum - free
- WISA: Wellbeing and Student Voice Conferences
- SoundOut: Report on northern England visit
- Ethos magazine: focus on student activism
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Cover:

Students discussing and advocating
VicSRC Congress 2019: Photos pp 1, 25-29 by VicSRC

Why does Connect exist?

Connect is an independent practice journal,
published bimonthly since 1979!

It aims to:

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

Connect:

ABN: 98 174 663 341

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This Issue:

There's increasing talk about the idea of students and teachers 'co-designing learning' in classrooms. What does this mean?



It seems that 'co-design' can mean anything from asking for students' *feedback* about previous learning (eg units of work) through to substantial *planning learning together*. At a recent secondary college workshop, we started talking about the *questions* that might form the basis for seriously working together on the 'co-design' of units in various subject areas, using an inquiry approach. We might term this process '*feedforward*'; it doesn't limit students' roles to just providing *responses* that enable teachers to do further planning, but vitally involves students in the process of forming and deciding on learning from the start.

The following questions might be a start. Classes could choose those most relevant from this list, create further questions that suit their situation, and then re-order them. (*We had these on separate slips of paper, so we could choose those most relevant and then juggle the order round.*) Think about the information that the answers provide for both students and teachers, which would enable co-creation.

Here are some starters:

- *What is required to be taught/learned?*
- *What do we already know about this?*
- *What questions do we have about this?*
- *What do we want to know/learn about this?*
- *Why do we want to know/learn this?*
- *Do we understand what is required (language etc)?*
- *How will we show our learning?*
- *How do I learn best?*
- *What could we do to help us learn?*
- *Who could help us learn this?*
- *What happened?*
- *How did it go?*
- *What would we do differently next time?*

We'd be really interested to hear of anyone trying such classroom approaches: *how did it go? what did you learn? how would you change these processes and questions?*

Also in this issue: more information about the **International Conference on Student Voice, Agency and Partnerships** in Melbourne on 9-11 December this year. An *Expression of Interest* is now available on the Conference website.

The **Audits** that were in recent issues of *Connect* have drawn positive responses, including system interest from various parts of the world. We now have (free) copies of these as 'stand-alone' PDFs (ie without *Connect* page numbers) - ask for them if you're interested to use them.

Next Issue ...

Information from the Victorian Student Parliamentary Conventions; participatory school practices in Bangladesh, program details for the **International Conference**, initiatives in Queensland and New South Wales ... all these are possible articles - along with your story! **Share it now!**

Roger Holdsworth

Next Issue: #239: October 2019

Deadline for material: end of September, 2019



International Conference on Student Voice, Agency and Partnerships

Melbourne: 9-11 December 2019

You are invited to express your interest in attending and/or presenting at the **International Conference on Student Voice, Agency and Partnerships** in Melbourne from **9th to 11th December** this year (2019). This relatively small and focused Conference is organised through **Social Education Victoria** and sponsored by the **Melbourne Graduate School of Education**. It will bring together people who are active locally, regionally, nationally and internationally in the areas of **student voice, agency, participation, partnerships and leadership**.

Conference Program and Expressions of Interest:

A detailed program for the Conference is being developed, including ways for you to present and participate.

You will hear from experts, and discuss current directions and issues in student voice, agency, participation, partnerships and leadership, particularly around areas of:

- The purposes and practices of education and learning, including curriculum and pedagogy;
- Student voice and agency in learning, including flexible learning;
- School and education governance.

Who should attend?

This International Conference is intended for those already actively involved in these areas. It will invite and be of central interest to:

- **researchers/academics:** *in the areas of student voice, agency, participation, leadership and student-adult partnerships;*
- **primary and secondary school students, and student representative bodies:** *who are taking leadership roles at local, regional, national or international levels to further the role of students in learning and school decision-making;*
- **teachers/practitioners:** *who are actively working to elevate student voice, agency, leadership, participation and partnerships in learning and school improvement initiatives;*
- **school and educational leaders and policy makers and government:** *who are committed to integrating student voice, agency, participation and partnerships into school decision-making and teacher education;*
- **NGOs/support organisations and advocates:** *with a mission to amplify student voice, agency, participation and student-adult partnerships in education redesign.*

Expression of Interest: www.svcmelbourne.com

An **Expression of interest** form is now available on the Conference website. Complete this form by **September 1** if you wish to **attend** and/or **present** at the Conference. We will then invite you to register for the Conference when registrations are open.

Expression of Interest: Now Open
Student Voice, Agency and Partnerships International Conference

www.svcmelbourne.com
Melbourne
9-11 December 2019



Why should you attend this Conference?

This International Conference will be an intensive meeting place for focused and specialist researchers, school students, school leaders and teachers, policy workers, and support organisations – from around Australia and internationally – in the areas of student voice, agency and partnerships.



Organisers:

The Melbourne Conference is organised with support from **Social Education Victoria**, and sponsored by the **Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education**. Its Steering Committee consists of individuals interested and involved in areas of student voice, agency, participation and leadership – from The University of Melbourne, Victoria University, Deakin University, Monash University, the Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC), the Foundation for Young Australians, University High School, Mount Waverley Secondary College, and the *Connect* journal – *supporting student participation* (as convenor).

You will hear about current initiatives and practices, and discuss and plan directions for future developments.

- Conference sessions will be about sharing what is happening, discussing current research, advocacy, policy and practice issues, unpacking challenges, and exploring and shaping future research, policies and practices.

You will meet with and hear from other people who are active and involved at local, regional, national or international levels in your areas of interest.

- Researchers and academics, students, teachers and school leaders, policy workers and support organisations, will be speakers, workshop presenters and panel participants. There will be specific times for you to meet together with colleagues.

You will be able to connect directly with people working on these ideas from other perspectives.

- The Conference offers opportunities for researchers, students, policy workers, advocates, school leaders and teachers to connect with others, and to share their latest work in the areas of student voice, agency and partnerships.
- It provides opportunities for collaboration on future projects, including opportunities to develop collaborative research applications.
- It will promote a connection between theory and practice, and for identifying areas and linkages for further research, policy and practices relevant to the field.



Sponsors and Supporters:



From learning walk to discussions about improving our Student Council

Students from Prep to Grade Six at St Patrick's School, Lilydale, were recently involved in taking members of the *Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM) Student Voice Reference Group* on a tour around the school, sharing our personal experiences of Student Voice and highlighting the opportunities that we get to have a say in what happens at school.

These students, along with some of our other student leaders, later met as a part of a larger group to discuss issues and to share our thoughts and ideas and how much we feel that we are heard at school. One of the issues that was raised a number of times throughout the discussion was how our school's SRC operates, especially the way that students are elected to the role.

How our SRC currently runs at St. Patrick's

At St Patrick's, each class from Prep/One to Five/Six has two class representatives on the SRC. They hold the position for the whole school year. We have a role description for our SRCs that was written

by school leaders, however, students were also given the opportunity to have input. This role description states what is involved in being a student representative and also identifies the skills and attributes that the SRC rep should aim to have.

Students self-nominate for the role, and then have to prepare and present a speech to their class, who then vote for the SRC members. The elected SRC representative is then inducted into the role in front of the school and parent community. Soon after, students begin to undertake their role by attending SRC meetings and running class meetings. SRC meetings are held three times a term, and more often if needed.

In the first meeting of the year, the SRC representatives are directed to return to their class and hold a class meeting where they are to discuss: *What do you like about our school?* and *What aspects of our school would you like to change?* Each class's SRC representatives lead the discussion, take notes and then bring these notes to the next lunchtime SRC meeting.

From this initial class meeting, the SRC representatives choose an area that they would like to focus on. They then go back to their class and report on what was discussed and gather more information for the next meeting. At the SRC meetings, the SRC representatives also prepare questions to ask their classmates in preparation for the next meeting.

The SRC meet with the principal when they have suggestions for change and present their ideas to the Parents and Friends Committee when needed, for example when we need support to fund our ideas.



Some issues that we have discovered

During our discussion with the *Student Voice Reference Group*, we have found some issues regarding how we nominate for SRC and also with how students are elected.

There is the expectation that all students write a speech to present to their class if they wish to be elected to the role. The problem with this is that only students who are good at writing and giving speeches end up being on the SRC. We could be missing out on using the skills of someone who is highly creative, organised or strategic because we have limited the criteria to someone who can prepare and present a speech.

Other issues that we recognise are that it tends to be only the 'well behaved' students who get elected into leadership roles such as the SRC. Are we limiting the possibility of hearing the voices of **all** students? People who have issues in the classroom or on the playground, can possibly give us another perspective on how things are operating at our school.

There is also the issue concerning popularity; the more popular you are, the more votes you are likely to get. How do we combat this so that people who may be quieter, but still have a passion to improve our school, get the opportunity to share what they believe to be important issues related to their schooling?

Finally, we believe that there is an issue with the transparency of voting. Teachers count the votes for all areas of leadership and the students are not involved in the counting of the votes.



This can lead to a breakdown of trust between the teachers and students.

Where to next?

We believe that students running for SRC should be allowed any type of presentation they would like in the presentations to their classmates, that highlight their skills and the qualities that they would bring to the SRC.

We plan on meeting with Mrs. Graves, our Student Wellbeing Leader, and discussing how we can make these

changes to the role description and in the nomination process. We will then need to present our ideas to Mr. Klep, our principal, and to other teachers to see if they believe that our ideas can work. We believe that by making the process more inclusive and fairer for all, we can continue to allow for greater student voice at St Patrick's.

Ella Bain (Grade 2), **Darcey Barker** (Grade 6), **Sasha Maggs** (Grade 5), **Angus Upton** (Grade 6) and **Sarah Graves** (Student Wellbeing Leader)
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Groovie Smoothies

As a teacher at a large P-12 Government school in Melbourne's northern suburbs, with an interest in adolescent health and wellbeing, I wanted to improve health outcomes – healthy eating, physical activity and mental health – for the young people at the College.

The idea for the establishment of a pop-up business using a smoothie bike (a human powered exercise bike with a blender jug attachment) came from brainstorming with colleagues and from my involvement in a local workshop focussing on promoting healthy eating and physical activity among young people. I identified that a VCAL program was a good fit for the running of the project, as students could achieve competencies for their VCAL certificate.

I was successful in gaining a grant through **Healthy Together Victoria**, for my project that I entitled the *'Morning Meet Up'*. This enabled me to purchase and gift the smoothie bike (along with all the resources required to create a pop-up business) to the VCAL team in early 2015. Within weeks, the VCAL students renamed the *'Morning Meet Up'* project *'Groovy Smoothies'*, created their smoothie recipes, logo and motto, and the project got underway with students running their pop up business both within the school and externally.

When the project began, I was primarily interested in creating a project that enabled a group of students to spread health promotion messages to the whole school community. Through this opportunity, they could become leaders in the school, and I anticipated this could be an opportunity to also build their self-confidence.

However, I had many questions about the project. *Was this a worthwhile project? Was it having an impact on the students involved?* I was interested to investigate how the VCAL students believed *Groovy Smoothies* had influenced their lives.

Using a qualitative research methodology of *Photovoice*, young people narrated their story about how the project influenced their self-perception and engagement in their schooling, through powerful images and interviews. Results from the research indicated that young people felt empowered and experienced a sense of pride through operating the health promotion project. This article reiterates the empowering nature of ownership and youth participation when working with young people on projects that have an impact on them.

Background

Health and engagement

Health research overwhelmingly points toward poorer health for adolescents, and this increases the need for health promotion projects that target adolescent health and wellbeing. Engagement in schooling has been shown to be a significant protector for young people's health, so creating programs that enable young people to be actively engaged in their education and community is vital in building resilience.

School engagement is more than just academic investment in learning. Engagement also includes both behavioural and emotional engagement and can be understood as an investment in proactive attitudes to school activities. When schools create positive environments where a sense of belonging is nurtured in the student population, students will, in turn, experience increased connectedness, motivation, commitment and engagement in learning. Young people are largely attracted to experiences that empower them to make a difference, are meaningful, and allow them to contribute to the communities they live in. When engaged in these experiences, young people develop self-confidence, self-worth, intrinsic motivation and connections with others.

Experiences in traditional school settings for vulnerable 'at-risk' young people are largely negative, resulting in many dropping out of school early. This has a significant impact on pathways into adulthood, with an increased likelihood of long-term unemployment and lower income earnings over their lifetime. But schools also have the capacity to enable young people to experience a sense of belonging through social connections and exposure to teachers and other adults who show that they genuinely believe in them, and through participation in programs where they believe they can make a difference.

A school's ethos and organisation can also directly affect levels of attainment and behavioural issues as well as the wellbeing of students and staff. Schools

"Bikes that go nowhere"

with strong leadership, high levels of student involvement and expectations, and which frequently evaluate and praise, will often experience student cohorts that perceive school to be a supportive and safe place, and where young people are more likely to engage in positive health behaviours.

VCAL

The **Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL)** is an applied learning educational pathway that, amongst other aims, attempts to reengage young people at-risk.

The VCAL curriculum has been designed to meet the learning needs of young people and build connections within their community. It aims to engage young people who have experienced limited academic success, desire to work and an increasing intolerance to school rules, and who exhibit specific learning temperaments such as a preference toward learning that has relevance, rather than formal fact-based learning. It is pedagogically responsive, delivering a curriculum that is negotiated; it has the flexibility to start where the learner's needs lie. Young people enrolled in the VCAL program are able to experience personal success and develop resiliency in authentic learning with real world applications. The applied learning pathway that VCAL is modelled upon enables teachers and students to work together in partnership on projects to encourage the development of real world skills such as teamwork, problem solving, initiative, planning, organising and cooperation.

Since its inception, VCAL has been widely implemented in Victorian schools and alternative educational institutions. However, little research exists relating to the impact of VCAL's learning framework on the young people enrolled in this educational pathway.

Setting

The College is a very large and growing school. Its growth has presented challenges for student engagement and student satisfaction. Students at Victorian government schools complete an annual **Student Attitudes to School Survey**, with data informing school leaders of the school climate and enabling them to develop targeted implementations for school improvement. Analysis of the College's **Student Attitudes to School**

Survey identified key areas of strength and weakness. Key themes were indicated through the analysis that informed the research design and question. Primarily the project **Groovy Smoothies** was interested in opportunities aimed at improving connectedness to school and to also harness the students' high levels of reported motivation to succeed.

The research

Design

The core aim of the project was to increase youth participation and leadership in young people at-risk. My research aimed to answer the question:

"How has participating in the 'Groovy Smoothies' healthy eating project influenced a targeted group of 'at risk' students and their engagement in schooling?"

I decided to use a research approach called *Photovoice*. This is an innovative method of data collection: a form of **Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR)**, grounded in health promotion principles and theoretical foundations in the field of critical consciousness, feminist theory and community-based approaches to documentary photography. The use of *Photovoice* with young people has increased with the acknowledgement that young people are experts in issues that impacting on them. Through *Photovoice*, participants are able to capture photo images of familiar scenes, which have the ability to be understood regardless of cultural background or literacy skills. Through *Photovoice*, young people are able to reflect on being key facilitators in creating a space for positive, sustainable change in health outcomes.

Research using new technologies with young people has emphasised their use of social media as a natural part of their habitus. For example, *Instagram* is a free photo-sharing mobile phone application that is among one of the most popular social media applications used by young people. Hence, a modified application of *Photovoice* to use *Instagram* as the core method of collecting, viewing and sharing photos was used for this research project. This enabled young people to use their own phones to take photos in a wider range of contexts including at school, at home and out in the community.

Recruitment

Participants were selected in consultation with the VCAL coordinator. These students had recent or consistent knowledge of and involvement in **Groovy Smoothies** as a project. Fourteen students were invited to participate in the project, and 12 of these returned signed consent forms. All were female VCAL students, with seven in Year 12 and five in Year 11.

Process

Step 1: Orientation - Photovoice induction

In the initial meeting, the participants who had returned a signed consent form were inducted into the research project. I discussed the project outline and participant guidelines. Documents were described and an explanation of each task element was discussed. Participants were informed of the task, in line with College values and expectations. This particularly related to the use of *Instagram* as a method of data collection. Participants were informed about potential issues with photographing themselves or others in the College uniform, performing illegal or risky acts, and possible consequences both legally and within the College. Participants were required to create their *Instagram* page and profile name.

Most participants were confident about creating an *Instagram* account, however, a description of how to do this was provided. There was also a College appointed moderator for the *Instagram* page, and students were told about this role.

The task for participants was for each to take photos over the course of three weeks. To facilitate regular uploading of photos, participants were encouraged to upload three photos per week for three weeks.

Step 2: Producing Photos

The group of participants brainstormed around the following prompts to facilitate ideas for photographs:

- **Purpose:** 'How has **Groovy Smoothies** influenced your purpose at school?'
- **Belonging:** 'How has **Groovy Smoothies** influenced your sense of belonging to school?'
- **Competency:** 'How has **Groovy Smoothies** influenced your sense of competency?'
- **Identity:** 'How has **Groovy Smoothies** influenced your identity?'

A concept map was created for each of the prompts. Participants met each week with me, and these meetings supported participants, generated ideas for photos and discussed issues or problems met, and modified the purpose of the research project. The weekly meetings also helped to build trust between participants and myself. Throughout the process I kept a journal noting observations about participant interactions.

Step 4: Creating the Instagram feed

Instagram enables users to find and locate images labelled with hashtags. After creating their own Instagram profile, participants were required to 'friend' the Instagram page, then upload photos using the Instagram hashtag created for the project. Participants were able to search the Groovy Smoothies page, where they found images that fellow participants had uploaded relating to the project. Participants were encouraged to give their images a caption, make comments and 'like' other participants' photos.

Posting and sharing photos on Instagram presented ethical issues around confidentiality, loss of unauthorised access, access to participants' personal data and netiquette (etiquette on the internet). Strategies to ensure the safety of participants included the use of a pseudonym to disguise the true identity of the participants, using privacy settings, informing participants of appropriate content to upload and recruiting a third party moderator.

Step 5: Photo discussion

Because of program interruptions, I then met with participants in pairs or small groups to unpack the visual data collected.

Interviews with participants were recorded and transcribed. Participants were asked to select up to nine of the photos uploaded onto the Instagram page, and respond to the following questions:

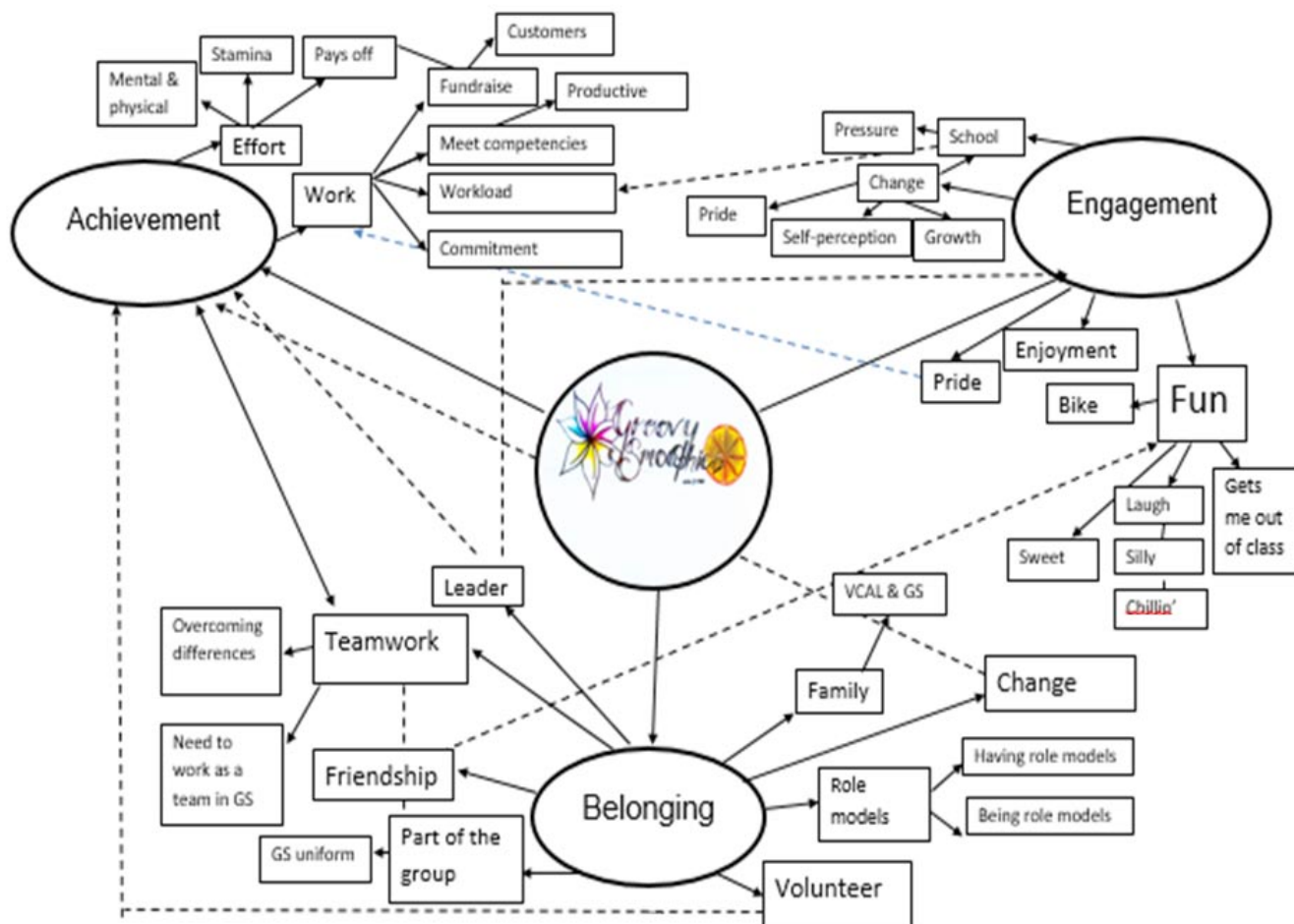
- What do you see in this photograph?
- What is really happening here?
- How does this relate to your experience of school?
- How does this relate to your experience of Groovy Smoothies?

Data analysis

I then previewed the photos alongside their titles and the emerging narratives from the transcribed interviews. I compared all participant photos with interviews in their entirety, and finally linked the data to themes reflected in the research. I searched the data to find repeated patterns of meaning and coded themes to identify main and sub-categories relating to the research aims and objectives, and checked these patterns with Groovy Smoothies participants and an external researcher to assess the validity of the thematic analysis of the results. A colour coding system was created for this research project attributing a colour to a particular theme with additional refining of the themes into a detailed mind map.

Results

Some students dropped out of the project due to a range of reasons: absence from school, problems with their Instagram accounts, or incompatible photo files used to transfer images. Of the 12 initial participants, results from seven were included in the research. Sixty-seven photos were taken and, through refining the images, 45 were selected for in-depth analysis.



Themes

Three key interconnected themes emerged from the interviews:

- **Engagement:**
The role of fun in learning and making friends through the journey
- **Achievement:**
The workload involved and the need to work as a team giving a sense of purpose
- **Belonging:**
Change, growth and sense of belonging experienced through being involved in **Groovy Smoothies**

Engagement

Fun and enjoyment of **Groovy Smoothies** was a key theme that appeared frequently in the photos and interviews of the participants. They saw that making and selling smoothies was a demanding task, but it was also fun and engaging. While school can be viewed as hard work, opportunities where fun can be experienced increase engagement in the task:

*"It may seem like hard work but we always seem to have fun somewhere along the lines... **Groovy Smoothies** is really good and I suggest that everyone gets involved with it because look how fun it looks."*

The VCAL program enabled students to choose from a range of tasks that suited their interests. One participant described her journey into **Groovy Smoothies**:

*"Joining VCAL I got introduced to this [**Groovy Smoothies**]; it was voluntarily, and I like doing volunteer work so... it was just time that I could... grow."*

Choosing to volunteer in activities deemed fun were catalysts for her personal growth and change. When asked about how her photo related to her experience of **Groovy Smoothies**, her response was that: *"It's something that everyone can do... it can bring friends closer... it's just fun"*.

Achievement

The sense of achievement in participants' photos and comments demonstrated their ownership of **Groovy Smoothies**. The sense of responsibility for ensuring that events were successfully managed contributed to participants' personal achievement and drive.

Working for a purpose

Groovy Smoothies enabled participants to generate profits to contribute toward VCAL projects. Therefore, customers were viewed as important for **Groovy Smoothies'** longevity, as @groovysmoothies_jaqi identified in her picture (following):

*"People are actually buying some **Groovy Smoothies** and enjoying themselves... there is a whole heap of different fundraisers throughout the school year and **Groovy Smoothies** is a big part of it... this is a normal day for **Groovy Smoothies**."*



Physically demanding

Being productive entailed being involved in hands-on aspects of learning. Commenting on the photo of students' legs, @groovysmoothies_naomi said that this demonstrated: *"being productive by finishing our work"*, while @hay_cass said that the work involved in **Groovy Smoothies** required knowledge and commitment:

*"Because it is a messy activity so you get smoothie stains all over you and that's pretty much the fun part... it relates to school because school is messy; it can be organised and messy... every time I do **Groovy Smoothies** I end up in a mess."*



Additionally, @hay_cass identified the need for energy and determination both at school and in operating **Groovy Smoothies**. While she saw **Groovy Smoothies** as a fun activity, negative aspects included the physically demanding process of blending smoothies and the pressure of organising events – hence the need for teamwork.

Workload in the VCAL program, whether it be schooling commitments or **Groovy Smoothies**, was summarised in @hay_cass' photo of the VCAL work folder. The payoff for the hard work was viewed as positive and necessary to attain competencies toward the VCAL certificate.

"It show [sic] that even though it can be a lot of fun, it's quite a bit of a workload... it may not seem like a big workload but it does ask for a lot... they ask for our holidays, our weekends, but a lot of us are happy to do it because of our workload and we get things signed off."



The theme of workload in VCAL and the **Groovy Smoothies** project continued in photos from @groovysmoothies_jaqi (above) and @hay_cass:

"... school's tiring just like that... the Groovy Smoothies are actually very tiring – especially when you're the one riding the bike constantly and it's very busy".

Again there was acknowledgement of the workload required and sense of accomplishment when the job was done:

"...even though it is hard work... it pays off with the work that you do get to do."

Photos depicted a range of tasks and stages relating to **Groovy Smoothies**: "preparing for time to make the smoothies", and then about how **Groovy Smoothies** and school is "just organising events... just getting active and interacting". Preparing the fruits for the smoothie mix was a shared task: "It was hard work doing that, and then again school is just real hard work".

A video of the smoothie bike wheel spinning: "the wheel was turning just for my entertainment. It just keeps going and I guess I'll keep going" showed how the wheel was used as a metaphor for learning, life and sense of purpose: "by the wheels turning, hopefully it will keep turning, hopefully **Groovy Smoothies** keeps going on".

A photo taken at the 2016 Olympics Opening event held at the local shopping centre was significant, as @groovykt, in summing up the day, identified it as sweet and sour:

"Well this isn't your average group that does the smoothies but it was actually really nice to, like, chill with them. This was a sweet and sour day just like the raspberries can be really sweet and sour, so yeah it just seemed like it went hand in hand. Like on this day we had, like, hardly any customers; they only came in for freebies... I think that was the only sour thing but the sweet thing was, we actually got along".

Growth and Change

Participants experienced growth and change in different ways. @schoolisgroovy identified changes in herself, her perception of school and involvement in **Groovy Smoothies**:

"At the start of the journey with the Groovy Smoothies group I am not the same as when I finish... School does take a big toll on people's life... so does Groovy Smoothies."



@groovykt wrote a detailed post about **Groovy Smoothies**' impact on her re-engaging in school and making close friendships:

"Well I just thought if I put everything on the one status it would explain like how blessed I am to be in this program".

The growth and change that @groovykt experienced in **Groovy Smoothies** is self-evident. It enabled her to achieve her goal of gaining her Year 12 VCAL Certificate:

"It [Groovy Smoothies] got me into school. Um, like I came into VCAL this year and I didn't think much of it really but I heard about this Groovy Smoothies stuff and I really enjoyed the idea of it so I volunteered and it was just... it was fun."

Belonging:

Feeling a 'part of the group', a 'team member' and a 'family' were all themes that arose from the participants. Belonging enabled participants to develop friendships with a wide range of people. Participants used images and words to describe *Groovy Smoothies* as an experience like being a part of a family, creating new opportunities to make friends and overcoming challenges in order to succeed:



@hay_cass described the *RUOK? Day* image as:

"Teamwork. So in VCAL it's a big teamwork exercise so you need to be able to work as a team to continue your studies... you need to work as a team to get Groovy Smoothies because there is so much process methods to getting the smoothies done so you need a team that you can work with."

Discussion

A narrative of young people and their engagement in the project, sense of achievement and their sense of belonging all shed light on how *Groovy Smoothies* has had an impact on them and their perceptions of school.

Being engaged was an overwhelmingly strong theme in participants' images and interviews. In reducing their disconnection from school, *Groovy Smoothies* enabled participants to feel they were involved in a project that was worthwhile and gave them a sense of purpose.

The importance of creating projects with young people as decision makers is evident in their thoughts and feelings of how they experienced *Groovy Smoothies*. Narratives in images and interviews revolved both around the participants' workload in the operation of *Groovy Smoothies*, and in the meaningfulness of the crucial role they play as team members. This allowed participants to experience being responsible, competent and committed to the task as well as beholden to others to meet task requirements. Their sense of contribution gave meaning to their attendance at and active involvement in school.

For some participants, the project provided a task perceived to be outside the usual school curriculum. It gave

them an opportunity to get out of learning in the classroom. For some participants, being required to sit passively in a classroom induced feelings of stress and therefore the learning that participants undertook as a *Groovy Smoothies* team member enabled their involvement in an integrated, active, authentic learning experience.

Participants identified the need to problem solve and be task focussed. They reflected on the hard work they embarked upon and achieved through their involvement in VCAL and *Groovy Smoothies*. Their articulation of their newfound commitment to their schooling demonstrated the importance of creating learning opportunities responsive to the learning needs of VCAL students.

Participants reported that their experience and feelings about school had changed over the course of the year; their relationships with others helped to shape these feelings of growth and change. Their involvement assisted them in maintaining their engagement in school, and strengthened their feelings of self-worth and intrinsic motivation.

The ability for young people in this project to feel empowered to narrate their stories through images was powerful. Through *Photovoice*, the participants were able to record the stories they wanted to tell. Collectively, the stories created by the *Groovy Smoothies* participants provide a richness to their shared experience of belonging to VCAL and *Groovy Smoothies*. Empowering these young people with a methodology that allowed them to express their opinions and understandings in the form of images gave a richness and depth they may have found challenging and disempowering in other forms. Participants largely embraced the process of capturing images to tell their stories in an energetic and positive manner.

Initially participants were reluctant to upload their images; there was insecurity as to the images they had taken and how the images would be perceived. There were issues of trust about the institution of the school and of adults – those in positions of power – imposing upon their social networking spaces. Time was taken to discuss the benefits of the ease of photo sharing, and this had an impacted on some participants' capacity to be involved and my ability to develop a strong relationship of trust from the outset.

Relationship building with participants had another aspect in the use and nature of *Instagram*. The immediacy and perceived expectations around social etiquette in social media influenced the participant-researcher relationship. Participants made it clear that they expected me to be actively involved in the *Instagram* feed eg liking images posted by participants rather than simply being an observational participant in this aspect of the research. Being an active participant in the *Instagram* feed was seen as important as the real world aspects of *Groovy Smoothies*. The length of time between a photo being posted and liking the photo was also a significant factor. This increased engagement and helped to build a collaborative community that was able to support wellbeing and social-connectedness, and facilitated co-operative participation in informal and effective learning and support.

Throughout the whole research project, participants identified that *Groovy Smoothies* was hard work. However, no participants chose to give up on the project. Participants indicated that their perceived connection to school had

Student Voice at our Middle and Later Years Campus

Student Voice started in 2018 at Merriang SDS. We started with four members and we now have seven. Our members are **Tim, Daniel, Darcy, Brodie, Eslem, Ula** and **Angel**. If you don't want to stay on *Student Voice* you can leave.

Student Voice members choose new students to join the group. We look for happy, well behaved, respectful students to join us. We wear our school uniform and *Student Voice* badge every day because we represent the Middle and Later Years students at Merriang SDS.

School Council AGM

Tim, Daniel and Eslem represented *Student Voice* at the School Council AGM. Time spoke, Daniel signed and Eslem showed pictures of what we'd done. We are the very first Merriang students to present at a School Council meeting. We went into the meeting by ourselves. We did a good job. We

were very proud of ourselves. We had Italian donuts filled with Nutella to celebrate.

Book House

We made a *Book House*. Parents and teachers gave us the books. Students borrow the books to take home and read. When they've finished they return the books to the Book House.

Great Playground

We wanted a playground where people are happy and good friends. We decided to give a certificate to people who were happy or being friends. *Student Voice* members take the photos and choose who gets the

certificates. We present the certificates at Whole School Music on a Friday. We know it is our turn to present when we hear the song "You're the Voice."

Recycling

We used to recycle paper and cardboard only but now we have a council bin, we recycle plastic, glass, paper, cans, bottles etc. The bin goes out every second Monday. Hannah from the Whittlesea Council came and talked about *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle*. We are going to buy a big worm farm so we can compost our food scraps.

Lunch Play Activities

We organise a game once a week in each yard. Eslem, Angel and Ula play a game with the kids in the Middle Years. Daniel, Darcy, Tim and Brodie organise a game in the Later Years yard.





School Wide Positive Behaviour School Launch

We had to choose the pictures for the *SWPBS Student Book*. The book is given to every student at the Middle and Later Years Campus. Every group had to parade at the launch. Tim had to announce each group and say what banner they were walking behind e.g. **BE SAFE**. We had to explain what *Be Safe, Be a Learner* and *Be Respectful* mean.

Student Voice members helped to cut the cake and to pop the big balloons filled with orange, blue and green paper. Lots of parents came to watch.

Friendship Seat

We are making two *Friendship Seats*. One is for the Middle Years yard and the other one is for the Later Years yard. We have to sand the seats, paint them, stick our drawings of happy students on and then varnish the seat. It is too cold at the moment to paint or varnish.

We all like being on *Student Voice*. We are a good team. Sometimes after our meeting we have a Coke Spider – yum.

For more information, contact:

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Taking control, and the power of choice

A day in the life of a BSC student



It's Wednesday period 3 at Bundoora Secondary College and fifteen-year-old Olivia makes her way to PAL - her *Pathways and Learning* group - with 13 other students ranging from Years 8-12.

Not that Olivia or her friends emphasise year levels any more, as the school has none other than Entry and Graduation. They greet each other enthusiastically, sitting comfortably together in collaborative groups, ready for the range of individual and group tasks they will undertake.

Olivia and her friends spend some time reflecting on their learning goals for various subjects and monitoring their weekly progress as their PAL leader walks around and chats with each one. They catch up about how they are going socially, emotionally and academically and converse about their skills, interests and subject choices. Olivia's PAL group are all in the same 'house' and they begin work on a whole school activity for Harmony Day, which is coming up. Each PAL has chosen a country to represent to gain points for their house. The room is abuzz with anticipation and activity as they work on the games, crafts and music they have decided to create or use.

Olivia now takes for granted how easily the diverse age groups work together. Her multi-year program is called PACE21, or 'Passion, Achievement, Choice and Empowerment for 21st Century Skills.' As the name suggests, it was established to give students choice and control over their learning and the focus is on not only academic success, but also the development of attributes such as persistence, initiative and curiosity and

skills such as critical thinking, collaboration and creativity.

Student engagement at BSC has increased significantly since adopting the '*Take Control*' model at the end of 2016. Under this model, students have a taster of every learning area in Entry year, after which they are free to choose from any subject offered within the school. Only English and Maths have remained core, and even these have been re-conceived to provide choice. For example, within English, students can choose from a range of options such as '*Create Your Own Adventure*', '*Trolls, Hashtags and Media Manipulation*' and '*Contemporary and Classic Literature*', just to name a few.

Maths also offers a variety of learning options that are offered according to the student learning level. It's OK to be streets ahead or slightly behind your peers. Our program is designed to meet you at your learning level and, through a balance of explicit teaching, hands on and projects, you progress according to your needs.

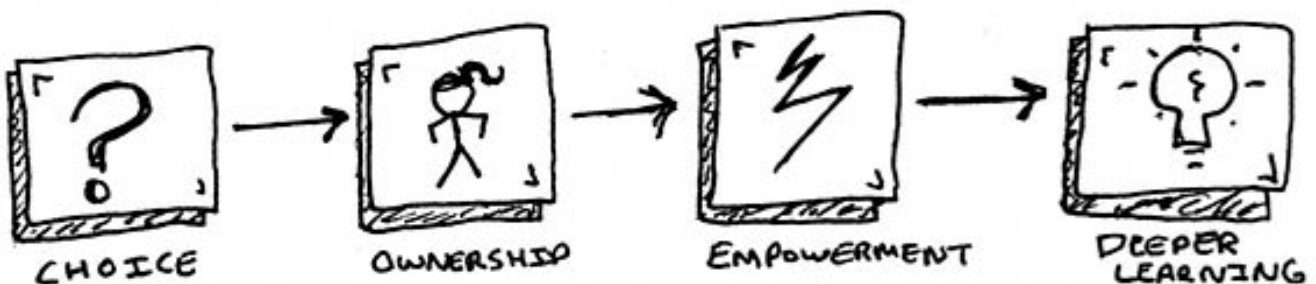
There is freedom and time to make mistakes. Staff at Bundoora acknowledge that interest level is a key motivator in student success.

Olivia's and her peers' choices are carefully mapped out and monitored with the support of their families and PALs and this forms the basis of the **Subject Selection Plan (SSP)**,

which is a central process. Family involvement is highly regarded and the **3 Way Conferences** twice yearly are a celebration with families of student empowerment and autonomy, as well as a collaborative reflection and brainstorm to map out possibilities.

Initially there was a concern that students might miss essential knowledge and skills through narrowing their choices at an early age. By and large, the opposite has been true. Olivia is a typical case: having power over her pathway has meant that she has invested in her decisions and maintained breadth of options. Previously she was disengaged in language classes. Having the power to opt out of languages has actually sparked within her the realisation of their benefits and she is now an avid supporter of studying languages. This has been the case throughout all learning areas, as student choice has empowered them to take control over their pathway and true ownership over their learning.

The choice doesn't stop at individual subjects. Within each classroom, teachers have been transitioning from traditional 'chalk and talk' methods of teaching to models of practice in which the student is central. Although teachers come into the classroom with expertise, the idea of 'delivering knowledge' to students who sit passively is gradually becoming history. Rather, the teachers expertly frame the targeted knowledge and skills into a developmental progression and students



have a vast choice over what and how they learn and how they will be assessed.

Again, the model of choice has breathed life into even stalwarts of learning, such as essay-writing. Being empowered in what and how they learn has meant that students are actually choosing to do tasks they previously groaned over. English teachers acknowledge that previously, writing an essay for many students was a chore they dreaded. Now, many are opting to do one as their preferred method of assessment!

Walking around Bundoora Secondary College, you are not likely to see many quiet classes of students sitting in rows, passively listening to their teacher or completing drills from a textbook. Although there will always be times at which these methods are appropriate, it is now far more common to see and hear students vibrantly engaging with their teachers and peers, constructing a prototype (the **Maker Space** is on its way!) and collaboratively solving problems. It's heartening to witness younger generations, such as Olivia and her peers, engaging with and driving their education in ways my generation never thought possible.

As I ponder the exciting potential of 21st century education, Olivia lines up with her friends to buy a drink from the outstanding business that her fifteen-year-old friend Adam started up as a school project. It strikes me that, through the **Take Control** model, this young man has been given permission to shine and he has grabbed the opportunity and challenge with both hands.

There is a lot of negative messaging that goes on about young people in our society, not least of which is the fear mongering that we should just get back to the '3 Rs' because of declining national literacy rates. The call to lock down choice and take it all 'back to basics' is never distant.

As I observe Olivia and Adam converse about his plans for adaptations and expansion, I feel indignant that this kind of entrepreneurial learning could be seen as less viable or valuable than purely academic studies. I watch them with tremendous pride: these young people are our future. They deserve a world-class education.

From the Bundoora Secondary College website:
<https://www.bundoorasc.vic.edu.au/>

"We are a diverse and inclusive community. We live by our school values of Respect, Responsibility, Resilience, Relationships and Rigour."

At Bundoora Secondary College, and since the beginning of 2018, we are embedding student-centred learning with a focus on authentic student empowerment and personalised learning pathways.

Our core purpose is to empower students so that they **'Take control'** of their learning and their lives. We work together to help them find and use their voice, discover and enhance their passions, and foster the growth and development of the whole person, so each student can thrive and contribute positively in the rapidly changing, globally connected digital age.

Our philosophy is that students learn best and are better prepared for the challenges of life when they take control and ownership of 'their choices'. They take control of their decision making, learning pathways and learning methods. Education is not *'done to them'*; we are *active partners* in learning.

Students at BSC are not bound by the traditional year-level classes. The school is broken into Entry Year, PACE21 and VCE/VCAL. This vertical offering of subjects creates students' choice and provides flexibility in the learning program, ensuring that all students are engaged in their learning at their point of interest and challenged at their point of need. For example, students in the middle years may undertake subjects from the traditional suite of subjects as well as from the College's Parallel, Pre VCE, VCE or VCAL programs. With our new vertical curriculum structure, students are based on the level they are working at rather than traditional year levels based on age.

Every student will choose a **PAL (Pathways and Learning)** leader from the teachers at BSC. The PAL will be their essential guide through their learning

journey. They, in partnership with family, will support each of their students in their overall growth and development. PALs track learning, engagement, connection to the school and friendships, and provide subject selection advice in accordance with co-developed learning plans to enhance and ensure successful outcomes for each student. The individual learning plans allow students to set goals and targets and cater for each student's passions, needs and interests.

Rigour and high expectations are core values that are necessary ingredients under the *'take control'* philosophy. Students self assess and their teachers assess their development against the *BSC Great Student* (21st century skills matrix). The matrix contains key 21C skills that highlight to students the pathways to success.

We recognise that learning can be challenging and students will encounter setbacks. We do not accept the language of 'can not'; instead we instill a belief in our students that it is a journey and *'you might not be able to do it YET'*-this is called developing a growth mindset.

We are a diverse and inclusive community. We live by our school values: **Respect, Responsibility, Resilience, Relationships and Rigour (the 5 Rs)**.

We provide a variety of opportunities for student voice at BSC such as a Student Leadership Council, student led tours, hosting of assemblies, the holding of positions on College Council. At Bundoora, students have an authentic voice into the everyday decision making at the school.

Anesti Anestis
Principal

Our Vision

'Empowering a love of life learning to thrive in a rapidly changing world'

Our core purpose of this College is to provide a broad and challenging education in order to develop students' 21st Century skills, abilities and knowledge needed as a foundation for further education, training, work and community participation.

Students at Bundoora Secondary College (BSC) are not bound by the traditional year level classes. The vertical offering of subjects creates student choice and provides flexibility in the learning program, ensuring that all students are engaged in their learning at their point of interest and challenged at their point of need. A Bundoora education will provide every student with the opportunity to develop their talents, to nurture a passion and to grow in confidence about their future. Every student will be supported in their intellectual, emotional, social and physical development by a highly professional group of teachers and education support staff.

Our adoption of the **'Take Control Model'** in 2017 and creation of the **Big Picture Academy** in 2020 means that Bundoora Secondary College is writing exciting new chapters of student-centred learning, with a focus on authentic and individualised pathways. These approaches have removed many of the traditional restrictions placed on student learning, and instead encourage them to *'take the steering wheel'*, owning what is learnt and where they are heading to.

As a member of the BSC community, following the **'Take Control empowerment model'**, students are no longer bound by traditional year level classes. Instead:

- Entry (*the traditional Year 7*)
- PACE21 (*traditionally Years 8-10*)
- Pre-graduation (*traditionally Year 11*)
- Graduation (*traditionally Year 12*)

Bundoora
Secondary College



Our Philosophy

'Yes is the default'

Provided choices are not harmful to students or others, or carry excessive financial burden, our policy is that **'the default is yes.'** With our vertical curriculum structure, regardless of age, students may select from traditionally senior programs, such as VCE units. This creates flexibility, ensuring that learners can be challenged at an appropriate level for their point of need and interests, rather than being restricted by age boundaries. 'Harm' could be defined as restricting their options to a very narrow pathway, which is why there are a number of checkpoints in place to ensure their decisions have been through a rigorous process of advice and consultation with others.

Learning Pathways

Subject selection and pathways plans are completed individually with students and their parents, through course counselling and guidance, to enhance successful outcomes for all. The SSPs map out students' passions, needs, interests and pathway and, because of this, are the guiding documentation for their time at BSC. A student's PAL leader and Head of House are important guides, mentors and advocates in this process. Weekly PAL sessions ensure that students can raise any concerns about their pathway with those who know them best and also celebrate growth, achievement and milestones together.

There are high expectations for learning, with everyone in the community accountable for learning, growth and achievement. This is reported against curriculum disciplines from the relevant Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) achievement standards and the BSCi (BSC Great Student matrix). This matrix is a grid of the essential skills required to thrive in the 21C.

The school's learning program is aimed at developing these 21C transferable skills and personal characteristics, which are valued across the globe. These skills are ones such as critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, communication, persistence, empathy, 21st century literacies... everything on the BSCi falls into this category.

Learning pace and structure

The pathway students choose should be driven by the kind of learner they are and their areas of interest. There is flexibility within all programs to explore areas that are not within the usual parameters of that course. For example, students undertaking a VCAL pathway may elect to take some VCE subjects as part of it. We encourage students to reflect regularly on their subject and program choices and continue to monitor whether or not they are leading to where they want to go. As *'guides on the ride'*, the staff at BSC look forward to many conversations with our students as they find their way and *'make their mark on the future.'*

Students are able to undertake VCE studies at any age, provided they have a realistic chance of successful completion and their participation in the class is unlikely to negatively impact on other students. The majority of students at Bundoora will be working towards a VCE qualification, but some will also be working towards a VCAL (Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning) qualification or an Alternative University Entrance Pathway, which is far more flexible and largely project based.

Student empowerment and choice

Student voice and empowerment is very important to us and we encourage students to utilise the many opportunities to have a say in school programs, structures, processes and culture. We also encourage students to explore entrepreneurial opportunities, links with the wider community and the 21st century notion of **'Anytime, Anywhere'** learning.

With the exception of Maths and English, students create their entire learning program from the wide range of electives. With guidance and nurturing from the PALLs (pathways and learning leaders) they have opportunities to accelerate their learning and turn their pathway dreams into reality. Innovation and revolution at Bundoora Secondary College.

The PAL system (Pathways & Learning)

Bundoora Secondary College has always had a commitment to individual student pathways. The adoption of the *Take Control Model* has seen the introduction of new learning structures to support personalised learning.

2017 saw the introduction of new learning structures to support personalised learning. This means that (unlike many other models of schooling) students have a real choice in their education.

Why the change?

Around the world, education is in a crisis. One quarter of young people do not complete their secondary schooling; classrooms are full of students who are not interested in, or engaging with, the curriculum being delivered; students are entering tertiary studies and employment without the necessary 21st century skills.

At BSC, we are passionate about our students developing the 21st century skills in a positive, supportive environment, with expert teachers and through studies they find useful and engaging.

Our philosophy

In a traditional schooling model, students have to study all areas of the curriculum, whether interested in those areas or not. It assumes that *'one size fits all'*: that all students will need, and should have, the same knowledge and skills for the future. Additionally, many 'elective' subjects such as the arts and physical education are often undervalued in schools and can be given very little time and resources.

Bundoora Secondary College has moved away from this traditional view of education in an effort to give our students the world class education they deserve.

Our model gives control back to students by allowing them to choose for themselves the learning areas they wish to focus on. Other than English and Maths, which are compulsory due to their necessity in everyday life, students are free to choose from a broad range of exciting subjects, run by specialists.

We encourage students to choose breadth, as we value many different learning areas and styles. However, our system now allows students to study specific areas more deeply than would otherwise be possible. It also allows them to focus more intensely on particular skills and concepts, such as writing (rather than 'English'), algebra (rather than 'Maths'), photography (rather than 'Art') or on genre-based areas such as performance poetry, ancient civilisations and outdoor recreation.

Glossary of terms

You may see some of the following terms used in the College's website and documentation. Here is a guide to what we mean by them.

Student-driven subject

The content, skills and assessment for this subject are driven by student interests and curiosity.

Teacher-driven subject

The content, skills and assessment for this subject are selected by the teacher, usually with some room for negotiation, particularly of learning tasks.

Project Based Learning (PBL)

Students drive an inquiry which often addresses a problem they are interested in. Using a design process, they generate possibilities and refine their ideas. The project culminates with the presentation of their solutions, findings or recommendations. Learning is across many areas and domains, rather than focused on one subject area.

Mapping and Monitoring Progress

Students and their PAL leader conference together with families on a regular basis to ensure that the subject selection plan is understood and accepted by all. It is also subject to twice-yearly reviews by members of the principal class.

Throughout the term, students meet at a designated time with their PAL leader to monitor, reflect on and document their progress in relation to their learning plans and goals.

Once subjects have been chosen, this not the end of the options! At BSC, teachers are keen to use student interests as the basis for learning. Many subjects are becoming project-based and the content is negotiated with students, using authentic tasks as the assessments.

Assessment of 21st Century Skills

Students regularly self-reflect on their development of these skills and set new targets for growth in each semester. Students self-assess using a tool developed collaboratively by BSC teachers called *'The BSC Great Student'*. This tool encourages students to identify where their 21st century skills, attitudes and characteristics lie. Learning behaviours at each level are explicit, so students can easily identify what to do to work towards the next level. In this way, they can become increasingly independent and self-driven and understand the value of these skills to their lifelong learning.

The Victorian Curriculum determines the basis of the developmental sequence within each subject offered at BSC from Years 7 to 10.

One of the great strengths of the BSC model is the scope and sequence that is available for each subject, allowing students of multiple ages to access learning at the appropriate stage for them. They are not locked into age or year level expectations and therefore can be sufficiently challenged and supported regardless of where their skills lie on the spectrum.

Learning in the senior years

The College places a greater emphasis on student pathways than outcomes, supporting students to pursue alternatives to the traditional modes of study if this is more suitable. Although we highly value academic excellence, we equally value the development of creative, compassionate and caring global citizens. This school supports students to build on their strengths in order to make their own mark on the future.

Students may undertake a VCE subject from Year 8 onwards if they possess the skills and disposition to study at this level. The College also offers a fully supported VCAL program for those who wish to undertake a vocational pathway rather than further academic study at the end of their schooling.

A number of VET studies and first year university subjects are on offer, as well as the encouragement and support to pursue learning off-campus.

A large range of VCE subjects are available to study and course counselling is a mandatory part of our program at all levels to equip students with the necessary knowledge to pursue their interests and ambitions.

<https://www.bundoorasc.vic.edu.au/>

A simple way to greatly improve our schools

I am proposing that our schools should follow the lead of the democratic education movement and implement school-wide participatory management!

I think most of us would agree that our school system could be improved. I believe that this proposal, if followed, will have a profound impact, leading to significant improvements in both our most challenging and our best schools.

The proposal means that we should invite every single person in the school to join a **School Improvement Group (SIG)**, which will meet regularly with the goal of making that school the best possible learning institution it can be. Every teacher, para/aide, counsellor, cafeteria worker, administrator, parent, secretary, custodian, support staff, and especially every student, is welcome! The only requirement is that the person must participate regularly and respectfully.

Furthermore, it must be made clear that those who choose not to participate as full-fledged SIG members are still part of the school improvement process. Their voices - their thoughts, feelings, ideas - will sometimes be requested and will always be welcomed and appreciated! The British philosopher John Stuart Mill wrote: *"The only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject, is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at."* The more perspectives that are offered and considered, the better 'our school' will become.

Pretend you're the principal

First off, the (everyone is invited) invitation alone will make your school a better place! You have just told all the people in your school that you think they are worthwhile; that you believe they have something to contribute. Right now, in every school in the country, there are quite a number of people who feel marginalised and are wondering if they are good enough - or who outright feel that they are not good enough! Your simple act of letting the people in your school know you want to hear their opinions validates them! It makes them feel more worthwhile,

and makes them feel better about themselves! When people feel better, especially when they feel appreciated, they perform better!

Feeling that you are worthwhile is one of the most basic of human needs. Another basic human need is the need to belong; the need to feel included, connected, and especially the need to feel that you are a significant part of something good! To be a part of a group whose committed mission is to make that school the best possible place it can be: hey, that's a good thing - so that means that you are a part of something good!

So boom, right off the bat, everyone in the school has a boost in two of the most basic human needs! Before long, you will have a triple win going on, in that you will have new perspectives and ideas available from people who have a new and improved sense of self, and who are living within a new and inspired school-wide collective energy!

The members of the SIG will spend many hours evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school, analysing why something is working well or not, and offering well-thought-

out suggestions on how best to expand or make even better the things that are working well, and how to improve or fix the issues that need fixing. They will look at curriculum, school regulations, behavioural expectations, food, extra-curricular activities, counselling and mental health services, the school-community relationship, and anything else that is brought up.

Power

The principal does not relinquish any power! The Principal still has the final say in school matters, but now her or his decisions will be better informed.

Oftentimes, principals and teachers want to introduce new and creative programs or courses into the school or the classroom. (I would guess the same is true for superintendents.) But their jobs, including dealing with mandates from 'above', are extremely demanding and, as such, they usually don't have the time and/or the energy to 'add one more thing to their plate'.

Here's where a SIG can step up! SIG members can put in that extra time in order to research, analyse, problem-solve, and just generally work out most of the kinks and logistical issues. They can then present to the principal a report that gives her or him both the information that s/he did not have the time to compile, and



also probably some specific suggestions on how to deal with would-be roadblocks and then effectively implement the program.

Thus initiatives that would otherwise have been impossible to accomplish will now see fruition!

Outcomes

So what kinds of results can be expected if you institute an all-invited **SIG** in your school? I would suggest these are:

- Increased feelings of self-worth.
- A happier and healthier school culture.
- Better curriculum: more interesting; more relevant and meaningful!
- More course choices: more music and other Arts; more apprenticeships and experiential learning; more extracurricular activities.
- More productivity.
- Less violence and/or disruptive behavior.
- Better interpersonal relations - both intra-group and intergroup.
- Less depression.
- Less drug and alcohol use.
- More optimism and hope!
- A stronger school-community relationship, wherein both will be healthier and happier places.
- Improved reading and writing levels.
- Increased attendance and higher graduation rates.

Some examples

Here are some **SIG**-like initiatives I have been involved with, from which I draw the above outcomes.

In 1967 I was working with the **New York Urban League** as a streetworker, which is a kind of roving counselor/social worker. The **NYC Board of Education** hired us streetworkers to hang out right inside their schools, connecting with both the youth and the staff. I was assigned to **Hughes High School**, where I instituted the **Open Forum**, wherein all students and staff members were invited to talk about how to improve the school. We had about 15 students and eight or ten teachers. As a result of the forum, ten new extra-curricular clubs were started.

In 1970 I was asked by the principal of a high school that I was subbing at if I would work off-campus and teach ten

very disruptive students for the remainder of the school year (for three months). When evaluating the program (which the students named **The Freedom School**), there were a few detractors (who felt that I gave the students too much freedom, and/or felt that as a white man I should not be teaching kids of colour) but more than 90% of those who 'saw' us and/or noticed the improvement in the students were very impressed. (Sadly, again, a new principal took over that summer and discontinued the program!)

See some comments (below); you can find further details at: <https://bit.ly/2XLwNzy>

"Opinion of Our Program

"I think our program is really something considering the hassle we've gone through to get where we are. The good things about the program is that we learn what we think we are capable of doing or at our level. All of us are together in the class and I think this helps with class participation. The teacher, or just "the head of the group" should be able to get through to his students and we are lucky because we have someone who understands.

"But as a group we should all have respect for each other and we should do some kind of work no matter who we are and not take all kinds of advantages. I feel that most of us, including myself, come in late too often and we should correct it.

"What are improvements needed in our program?"

"There really isn't too many improvements needed because I feel we did something this year that should wake people up.

"One I do know offhand is that we should speak up more in our class discussions because that really helps us. Like I mentioned before that we should make it to the Ed Center on time. We should get ourselves a little bit more together. And we can really make it next year if we really try." (June, 1970)

"The ten students ended up passing 38 of the 60 courses; not a great percentage (63%) but seven times better than the 9% they were passing at the high school. Attendance was much improved, and the group's behavior was excellent. Four of the ten passed all six of their courses; one passed five of six. These five students showed a noticeable change in their self-confidence, demeanor, and motivation. Personally, I think all ten students benefited from the program – nine for sure; one arguable." (Roger Dennis)

In an earlier issue of **Connect** (#207, June 2014) I wrote about my experience with the **Stevenson Improvement Club** in 1986, which was really a **SIG**. You can find out more about it at: <https://bit.ly/2JL6nnG>

In 1999 I was given permission to democratically run a small school (of 50 students) at **Rikers Island Prison**. We had in essence a **SIG!** Participants said:

"[The] inclusion of staff and students in planning and carrying out school activities made the school ... a happy and delightful place to be. It should be noted that this school served incarcerated men from 18 to 21 and was located on Rikers Island." (Retired Administrator)

"[Our school engenders] an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust between the staff and students that is remarkable. Many of our students have made real academic progress and some have taken and passed the G.E.D exam. We have students who have improved three and four grade levels in the few short months they have been with us... [Roger] cares deeply about the whole of the students he teaches... their intellectual development as well as their emotional and spiritual development. He gives them respect, and they in turn, come to respect first their untapped intellectual potential and then, to see themselves as part of a community dedicated to helping others to achieve... The positive energy in our school has freed all of us to concentrate on our mission, which is to work with the students as partners in their education, not controllers of it." (E Christopher, Horizons Academy/GRVC)

"Our school belongs to all of us; teachers and students learn from one another. Everyone is honored at whatever level they are at, so students are not afraid to learn..." (Todd, teacher)

"[Our school has] an environment that is more of a 'community of learners' than a traditional school setting... built on a mutual respect for students and teachers while stressing the importance of self-development and personal accountability..." (Solaz, teacher, GRVC)

There are further details at: <https://bit.ly/2NWuDsz>

In 2004, the year before I retired from the NYC school system, I volunteered to teach a **Social Health** class to 24 ninth grade students, half of whom were well-behaved and the other half (initially) quite disruptive. Their final exam was to answer these questions:

- **What did you like, and what did you not like about class?**
- **Would you recommend this class to others?**
- **What did you learn?**

Here are some of their answers:

"The things we did are important. We learned how to look at things from different viewpoints. We talked about different topics, such as family problems, what's happening in the world, police brutality, and other topics. We talk about them, write about them, and think about them. We learned so many things I do not even know how to describe them all. But all these things help us right now and in the future to make a better life."

"I would definitely recommend this class. This class is an opportunity to learn many new things. You also have the ability to speak out as a person that you are without someone judging you. Plus the teacher is great. He lets you have the liberation (freedom) of speaking your mind and having your own opinion so is really fun. I feel very comfortable expressing myself to the teacher and classmates about issues that is going on in the world because they understand. This is not like every other class. This class is different."

"We discussed the health of our society. We talked about how racism, police brutality affect us. We got a chance to see the world from a political point of view... However we did not just talk about the city we live in or the world around us but families. It was discussed how a family member involved in a car accident or drug abuse could tear the whole family apart. Just as the lessons were important so was the way Roger taught. You are able to express your opinion. Roger would bring in movies that reflect on larger important ideas, and he would also bring in recordings of class discussions so that the class may gain a better understanding of the discussion... Overall this Health class shines light on hidden aspects of the world you thought you knew so well. I have learned that in war civilians as well as soldiers get hurt. Also the newspaper and news stations may not always state the truth. It is perfectly healthy for boys to express their emotions. Finally, everyone in the world has something to teach you."

Some further comments from students are at: <https://bit.ly/2Jz3QhA>

SIG members

Some of the students who excel as **SIG** members will be young people who are already doing well in school. Others will be students who have been mired in the background, maybe even somewhat invisible, who will step forward and shine. And there will be so-called 'at risk' students (sometimes called 'trouble-makers') who will become trouble-fixers and problem-solvers!

Furthermore, and of extreme importance, **SIG** participants are experientially learning how to maximise their potential as life-livers and leaders! They're learning effective communication skills - i.e. the importance of assertive (instead of aggressive or timid) expression and active listening. They're learning how to keep their minds open and look at issues from every angle - and how to analyse and synthesise, and work with others to develop creative solutions.

They're learning the responsibilities of democracy and voting. These students will be better prepared to live fulfilling lives, and to be highly informed and productive citizens!

Roger Dennis
itistime.nyc@gmail.com
<https://bit.ly/2JG9kWK>



A Response

It has always been totally obvious to me that there should be some structure/structures for the voice of the people in any organisation. I have tried a variety of ways of doing this in classes, parts of larger schools and whole schools. All seem to have advantages and disadvantages.

The self invited direct democracy 'moot' that you suggest in this piece is one possibility, the randomly chosen jury approach is another, elected representative democracy approaches with appropriate constituencies are another - or a mix of all three. In my experience, a lot depends on the size of the organisation and the extent to which the forum has real decision making powers backed by a constitution or is just advisory to those in authority. However, all run the risk of being perceived as 'talking shops' or even places where the powerful learn how to manipulate the majority and spot 'trouble making' minorities more effectively.

There is a book waiting to be written here.

Derry Hannam
derry.hannam245@gmail.com

Walking with Terry: Reflections on six days in northern England focused on youth power

For six days in July, I walked in solidarity with my comrade, colleague and friend Terry Mattinson. In my 20-plus years experience as an independent consultant working with schools and communities to build a global movement supporting youth power, I have rarely met anyone like Terry. A long-time youth worker in Preston, Lancashire in the United Kingdom, his experience has afforded him wisdom beyond measure. *It was my honour to walk with him and listen, observe, and see young people and adults engage with him on issues that matter to me the most. This is a short reflection on that experience.*

Terry carefully shepherded me through an agenda that alternately inspired me and encouraged my own reflection on the work I've been doing. We visited youth-serving organisations in several communities, as well as schools for young and older learners. There were deep conversations about theory, practical discussions about taking action, and meaningful opportunities to dissect, digest and divulge our experiences and learning with several people along the way - especially with Terry himself.

Sitting in classrooms at several schools, I got to hear student voices sound out on issues they were learning about, projects they designed, and the difference they were making in the world. Excited young students answered my questions anxiously, sometimes with gentle prompts from their teachers, and other times with the restraint only well-taught learners can have. Their global perspectives behoove the pluralistic society they are growing up within. Other times, older students shared their wizened perceptions of taking action to change the world. They analysed the effects of their actions, proposed radical new ways of affecting change, and inspired each other, Terry and I, and others in great ways.

Some of the things I distinctly learned from young people in these visits included that they are intensely focused on making a positive, powerful difference in the world around them; they want to demonstrate to adults, including teachers, youth workers and parents, their concern for the larger world beyond classrooms and throughout the community, and they want to have fun while they're taking action to make change.

In the course of my time there, I was able to meet with several adults about

these issues too. I met with Steve Walker, a senior lecturer and program leader for working with children and families at the University of Cumbria. Steve has conducted a fascinating study at his University focused on establishing the validity of youth voice in evaluation. We discussed the nuances of his study, and I suspect there will be more conversations ahead as I explore the intricacies of what he's doing. I also met with Mary Sayer, Equality and Education Officer from largest trade union in UK. In the course of a morning, she and I had an intensive series of conversations with a dozen young people at Our Lady's Catholic High School in Preston, discussing the intersections of her interests with my efforts along the way.

One of the most intriguing conversations I had was with Nigel Ranson, the headmaster of Our Lady's. In a thorough but brief exchange tête-à-tête, he and I discussed the capacity, interest and ability of educators to engage pupil voice in substantial ways. As I elaborated on the difference between engaging voice and meaningfully involving students throughout education, our back-and-forth reminded me of the early advocacy I'd conducted in Washington state's education agency back in the early 2000s. It was an honour to talk with each of these folks.

Terry launched me back and forth through his region on trains, visiting surrounding cities with ease while allowing me to take in some gorgeous English countryside vistas, complete with fells and sheep galore! We also went to an old cathedral city called Carlisle. Sitting near the ancient Scottish border, Carlisle

was surrounded by an enormous wall that we walked along for a bit. I saw the cathedral and castle, and devoured other historical sites shared by Terry and his nephew Andy, who is also a youth worker in the area. Our tour there included a fantastic facility called the Carlisle Youth Zone. Focused on providing a fun, safe environment for young people to hang out, recreate and learn, the Youth Zone is one of many facilities spread throughout the nation that does similar things. I had a thorough tour with the youth work manager, Clint Howat. While we discussed the several informal youth voice opportunities here, I became distinctly aware of the opportunity these types of facilities have to infuse meaningful youth involvement and youth mainstreaming throughout their operations. Fascinating potential!

One of the greatest rewards of this visit was the chance to form a great connection with Terry. He's been working so hard for so long to engage young people, foster youth power, and nurture community connections with children and young people that really have changed the places they live. We shared the personal motivations we have behind our commitment to young people and discussed the faults and potential for our individual futures. He also took care to find me beautifully calming accommodations, and I enjoyed a relaxing, invigorating stay that uplifted my spirit and rekindled my interest in the world beyond my front door!

All-in-all, I was excited by the potential Terry Mattinson shared with me in his city of Preston and the surrounding area. Talking with so many people showed me more of the commonalities in our international efforts to engage young people in dynamic, powerful new ways. It also inspired me to consider new ways that I can continue my life's work, both where I live and far beyond.

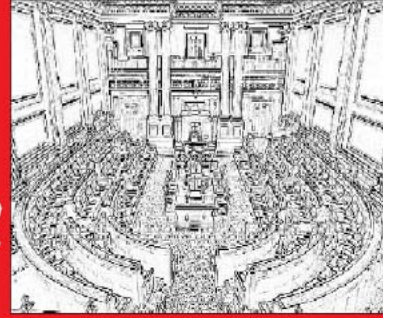
Adam Fletcher

SoundOut

Olympia, Washington, USA

adam@commonaction.org

Victorian Students' Parliamentary Program Primary Schools



The Victorian Students' Parliamentary Program Primary Schools' Convention was held in Parliament House in Melbourne on Tuesday August 6th. There will be a full report of this and the Secondary Schools' Convention (see page 36 of this issue) in the next issue of *Connect*.

In the meantime, here are some photos from the Primary Schools' day, courtesy of Sarah Lynch and Second Strike.





CONGRESS

WE DON'T MAKE CHANGE ALONE 2019

In 2019, the Victorian Student Representative Council hosted its 14th annual **Congress**, bringing around 200 students from across Victorian secondary schools (and even a couple of students from Queensland) together to discuss, debate and decide on the priority issues that are affecting their education.

This year the delegates came from locations as diverse as Casterton to Cheltenham, and Shepparton to Sunshine. We had a mix of genders and ages, and students from all school sectors. They raised their voices together to find solutions for a more effective and equitable education system.

A selection of workshops, including inclusive education spaces, school governance, story-telling through UX and

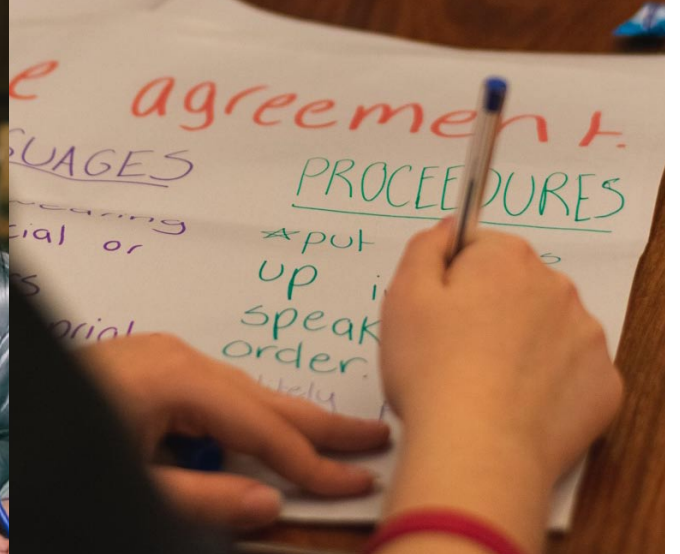
sustainability in schools, were offered to student delegates to build their capacity and the skills they could take back to school.

On the opening morning, delegates pitched issues that were important to them – ranging from a lack of student-designed curriculum and ineffective tech usage in schools, to lack of support for frequently absent students, and the stigma around VCAL. Eleven issues

were chosen to be workshopped in solutions-focused student-led action teams over the course of three days. These workshops culminated in a presentation of their plans for action to an audience of student, parent and teacher guests as well as other education stakeholders representing government and community groups, at the Congress Open Morning.

Finally, five issues and their possible solutions were chosen by all students present at Open Morning to be adopted by the VicSRC as priority advocacy areas, and these are outlined on the next pages. The photos on these pages show the delegates in action at **Congress 2019**.





Congress delegates define priorities for 2019-20

Sustainability Education

There is a lack of education on sustainability, and awareness amongst students of our impact on the world. There is also a lack of sustainable practices in schools, and inconsistency between schools of the implementation of sustainability programs like *Resource Smart Schools*.

We suggest three solutions:

1. Improve the implementation of sustainability as a cross-curriculum priority; establish regular reporting by teachers on the implementation of sustainability education in their classes.
2. Mandate specific time and funding for sustainability education; allocate a sustainability teacher to most high schools.
3. Allocate physical resources such as garden beds, 3-bin systems, grey water systems, which assist sustainability education to schools.

The VicSRC should lobby the VCAA for better, mandatory implementation of sustainability as a cross-curriculum priority, and to mandate teachers to report on this implementation; lobby the DET to spend more money on specific teachers for sustainability, and mandate a minimum amount of time to be spent on sustainability classes; and lobby the government for funding of garden beds and other sustainability education resources.

In schools, within a 5-year period, every teacher should attend a sustainability PD (with specific sustainability PDs created with Sustainability Victoria). Schools should report on their sustainability, and improve cross-curriculum implementation of sustainability.

Schools should fund a staff member to teach sustainability classes or bring someone in for smaller schools. Schools should be mandated to have sustainability education resources (grey water, recycling, compost, garden beds).

Individually, we should join the *Resource Smart Schools* program, and advocate for school leadership to value sustainability.

FUNDamental Equity

Students get different opportunities in their education depending on the school they go to. Schools are sometimes making ill-informed financial decisions resulting in funding being misused.

We suggest that we should:

1. Expand the current state-wide census to obtain data regarding school facilities, curriculum, and mental health support, for the DET to take to appropriate departments, in order to bridge the gaps identified in the results.
2. Acknowledge the disadvantages in schools by including more determining factors in the application process, such as school curriculum, facilities and mental health support. This will ensure that problems are appropriately targeted.
3. Advocate to the government to adopt transparency and communication in their funding plans so that schools are better informed to make financial decisions.



Politics 101

Students are uninformed about our political system, which leads to students not knowing how to enrol and how to vote, how policy works and what parties stand for. A lot of self-research must be done to be somewhat informed.

Civics and citizenship education in Victorian high schools is not meeting the needs of young people. It is not consistently taught to young people.

There should be consistent teaching of civics and citizenship. This can be done by providing PD sessions for teachers, to help them realise the importance of civics and citizenship, so that students will be better informed about these fundamental skills.

The VicSRC, with the support of key stakeholders such as the VEC and Parliamentary conventions, should collate a resource pack for teachers, including existing educational tools. In addition, student-led workshops would teach about the policies of political parties.

We propose that the VicSRC will run student-led workshops, advocate for consistent civics and citizenship education in households, and partner with other organisations such as the VEC, Youth Parliament, and Parliament Education Office to do this.

There should be a resource pack for schools to enable them to teach and implement this, and workshops from the VicSRC to students to inform them about policy.

When students know where to find reliable information, they may become more interested and make more informed decisions.



The VicSRC should advocate to the government, carry out research regarding current funding models and publicise the issue. It should write a report to the state government, advocate for transparency about schools receiving funding, and request for more inclusivity in funding applications for determining factors.

Schools should inform the students at the school of the issue and the need for a census, ensuring that the student body is aware of the process and changes to be made, and compile a concise written explanation of the funding being provided.

Individually, we should be making note of the potential for improvement within one's own school.





Real Life Skills

There are already real-life skills in the Victorian F-10 curriculum, but they are not effectively implemented. Students have a lack of understanding regarding work life, household management, civics and citizenship and social life, and therefore students finishing school struggle to manage all aspects of life.

We need to identify effective methods for real life skills to be implemented into schools. To do this, we should partner with external organisations who already provide resources and education on real-life skills and link schools to these organisations and resources.

The VicSRC could link online resources to the Student Hub and partner with the organisations to become a link between schools and the organisations.

Schools can reach out to organisations to run programs for their students, incorporate and integrate real life skills into existing classes, and set up and start running their own subject/workshop in or out of school hours.

Students can advocate for this to their SRC, discuss the best option for their school, and carry out the plan.

Climate Crisis

Students are not aware of the impact that climate change has – this is an educational issue.

There is a lack of action about climate change – this is an operational issue.

Climate change is being blind-sided – this is an issue of ignorance.

We want to see practical goal setting relating to climate change, student action with the optional aid of climate change organisations, and the promotion and education about action against climate change

The VicSRC could hold seminars and conferences for students, particularly primary students, about the issue. It could promote and spread calls to action through social media, government advertising, and publicising. It could carry out research on the government's inaction and present results to them in an appeal to action.

School projects could be developed with help from organisations, communities and VicSRC. School-level conferences could be held to increase awareness.

Individually, we could aim to change our lifestyle through education programs.



Vic Student SRC MEMBERS



**Are you a school
student in Victoria?**

Become a member of the VicSRC!

FREE for school students!

*As a student member, you get **discounts**
and links to **news** and **resources**.*

*You belong to a **statewide network**,
and vote to **choose the VicSRC Executive***

Join @ <https://bit.ly/2FDrg5m>

More *information* at:
<https://bit.ly/2WmEBHs>

VicSRC Executive Committee elections

Fifteen Victorian school students are elected by their peers to be the **VicSRC Executive Committee** each year. In 2019, the **VicSRC Executive Elections** are going online! Read on for details about how you can vote for the **VicSRC Executive Committee**!

What is the VicSRC Executive?

The **VicSRC Executive** is made up of 15 students who are completing secondary education in Victoria. These Executive members are elected by their peers every year, and their job is to govern the VicSRC and act on the advocacy priorities identified by Victorian students at the annual **VicSRC Congress**.

In a typical year as an **Executive Committee** member, you might do some or all of the following:

- Attend meetings with the Minister for Education;
- Speak on panels to teachers and educators;
- Advise the Department of Education on how to design programs or initiatives to best support students;
- Advise the VicSRC staff on the strategic direction of the organisation and which priorities to focus on; or
- Sit on committees made up of different stakeholders in the education system.

The VicSRC seeks to be as representative of all Victorian students as possible. We ensure diverse representation on the **Executive Committee** through a balance of students from rural/regional and metropolitan Victoria, students of all genders, and representation from a range of Independent, Government and Catholic schools. We also make sure that no more than two people from any one school are part of the Executive Committee. If you would like further information about this, please email us at election@vicsrc.org.au.

The VicSRC provides financial support for transport for rural and regional students and is committed to accommodating any access needs students require.

Any Victorian school-aged student in Year 7 to 11 or equivalent, who is also a **Student Member** of the VicSRC, is eligible to nominate for the **VicSRC Executive Committee**. Students who will complete Year 12 in 2019 are ineligible to nominate for a role on the **Executive**, as members must be currently enrolled in secondary education for the entirety of their 2019-2020 term.

However, current Year 12 students can get involved with VicSRC through alternative initiatives like the **Student Voice Hub** and are most importantly still eligible to vote in this upcoming election! If you're interested in finding out more, please download our **Election Pack** from our website.

Nominations

Nominations have now closed, and 35 students have put up their hand to be your representatives. It is now up to you – as a **Student Member** of the VicSRC – to vote.

You can see details of all candidates at: <https://studentvoicehub.org.au/vicsrc-exec-campaign/>

I want to vote for my Victorian student representatives!

Great! Voting for the students who will represent you to decision-makers and advocate on your behalf is an important thing to do.

All Victorian students in Years 7 to 12 and who are registered **Student Members of the VicSRC** are eligible to vote in the 2019-20 **Executive Elections**. You must be registered as a member by **11.59 pm on Sunday 11th August 2019**. To become a member, see <https://bit.ly/2FDrg5m>

Voting begins on **12 August 2019**. All **Student Members** will receive an email with instructions on how to vote.

We encourage voters to carefully consider which candidates would form the most motivated and diverse team (taking into consideration experience, age, year level, background and location), and be the best representatives for Victorian students at a state level in 2019-20. There will be information about each candidate on the ballot form when you vote online. Candidates also have the opportunity to upload a photo and bio to the **Student Voice Hub**.

More questions?

Get in touch with us on election@vicsrc.org.au and we'll get back to you as soon as we can!

Members of the 2018-2019 Executive Committee





Join the conversation now!
Students can join for free!

https://studentvoicehub.org.au/

Help us hit our goal of
1000 student members and win!

The Student Voice Hub is where we
celebrate and practice the best of student
voice and agency. It's been one whole year
since launching the Hub at Congress 2018.

So we've got an exciting announcement
(drumroll please):

Students can now win prizes for posting on the
Hub! Each student who posts on the forums, or
comments on a blog post, in the next month will
go into the draw to win two movie tickets!

We're already hard at work to make the Hub
bigger and better in 2020 but we need your help! The
more students using the Hub the more we can do to
make it better!

The first draw is on
Monday the 19th August
- so get posting!

Statement of Student Rights

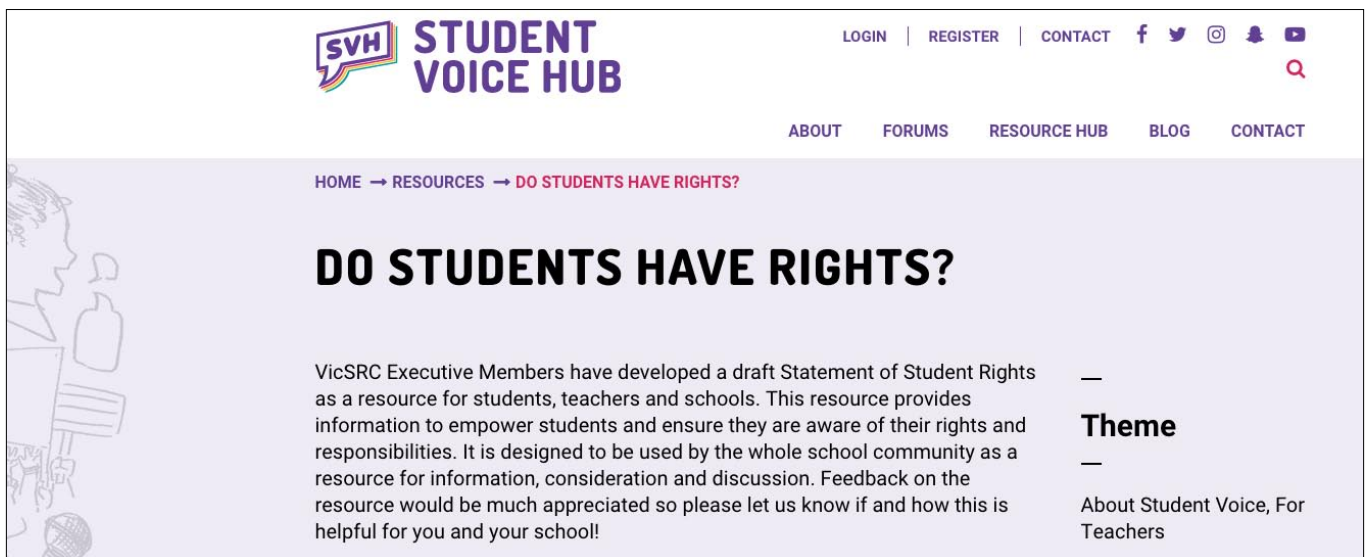
In 2017, students from Victoria identified the need to have a document
that provided easily accessible information about the rights of
students.

Feedback on the resource would be
much appreciated so please let us know
if and how this is helpful for you and your
school!

VicSRC Executive Members have
developed a draft Statement of Student
Rights as a resource for students, teachers
and schools. This resource provides
information to empower students and

ensure they are aware of their rights and
responsibilities. It is designed to be used
by the whole school community as a
resource for information, consideration
and discussion.

Leave us feedback at:
https://bit.ly/2KtFZPE



VicSRC STUDENT VOICE AWARDS

The Student Voice Awards are exactly what they sound like! Through these Awards, the VicSRC recognises the best innovations, practices, schools and people in student voice each year. To tell us about your work, check out the categories below!



Student-Led Project Award

recognises a group of students that have implemented a project in their school or community with the intention of a clear positive change or outcome.

Student Voice Ally Award

recognises an adult (including teachers, educators, youth or social workers or other members of school staff) who has supported and amplified student voice in a school of community.

Student Voice Primary School of the Year

recognises a primary school that has embedded student voice and agency into the school culture, undertaking a whole-school approach.

Student Voice Secondary School of the Year

recognises a secondary school that has embedded student voice and agency into the school culture, undertaking a whole-school approach.

Newsboys Foundation Youth Leadership Award

recognises a Year 12 student who has championed student voice in their school or community and has brought about positive change through their leadership and advocacy on behalf of young people.

When do they happen?

Thursday 24th October:

6:00 - 8:30 pm

The Library at the Dock

107 Victoria Harbour Promenade, Docklands

How to nominate?

Find out how to nominate and read through the criteria in the Nomination Pack at:

<https://bit.ly/2YCuZJ0>



Vic Partner
SRC SCHOOLS

Vic Student
SRC MEMBERS

ALTER



ALTER is a brand new VicSRC pilot program for **primary school students and teachers**, supported by the **Bastow Institute for Educational Leadership**.

The program consists of a series of three workshops, facilitated by secondary school students and VicSRC staff. These workshops will ensure that students and schools are equipped to develop best practice student voice. They bring educational leaders – students, teachers and school leadership – together in a unique learning space to collaborate, co-create and spark practical strategies to transform their schools and learning environments.

At the workshops:

- Students will work on a project to create collaborative and sustainable change at school using the VicSRC's **ALTER Model of Student Led Action**.
- There will be **Student Voice Professional Development** sessions for teachers during the workshops.
- Schools will gain access to resources and ongoing support online via the **Student Voice Hub**.



Where:

The program is taking place in five locations around the state.

North Melbourne

Workshop One: Wednesday 14th August
Workshop Two: Wednesday 4th September

Castlemaine

(Workshop One: Monday 22nd July)
Workshop Two: Monday 2nd September

Dandenong - sold out

(Workshop One: 23rd July)
Workshop Two: TBA

Geelong

Workshop One: TBA
Workshop Two: TBA

Eastern Region

Workshop One: TBA
Workshop Two: TBA



CELEBRATION

Monday 2nd December

For more information or to sign up students, please contact **Tom Nice**, the VicSRC Programs and Events Officer: events@vicsrc.org.au or **0487 503 515**.

ALTER is proudly supported by **Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership**.



bastow

Vic Partner SRC SCHOOLS

All schools in the state of Victoria that have primary, secondary or some mix of students can become **VicSRC Partner Schools**.

Partner Schools get:

- The VicSRC as your *constant companion* on the road to student voice super powers!
- Advice and referral for student voice at our e-mail address: info@vicsrc.org.au
- Eligibility to enter the *Student Voice Awards!*
- Discount codes for all *Student Voice Workshops* and *Student Voice Awards* tickets
- Access to bookings for *Teach the Teacher* and *Congress* tickets
- A monthly *Partner Bulletin* featuring resource highlights and best practice student voice
- A subscription to *Connect*
- A school membership of the *Student Voice Hub* with ten teacher accounts, access to restricted resources, private forums and more!
- Eligibility to *feature in VicSRC work* including blogs, videos and spotlights
- A sweet *VicSRC Partner School logo* for all your newsletter, website and email signature needs!

Become a Partner School at:

<https://bit.ly/2TL848K>

VicSRC **Member Schools** as of August 2018 are automatically **Partner Schools** until **31st December 2019!** New **Partner Schools** can join for **\$150 + GST** for a full year of partnership (discount or cluster partnership options may be available).

Once you sign up, you'll receive an invoice to your nominated email address. This is an automated process and the invoices will come out yearly on this date to make maintaining your partnership easier.

At the start of the school year you'll receive a quick survey prompting you to update your details. This is to make sure we've got the best and most up to date contacts for all your student voice needs!

More details at:

<https://bit.ly/2HXH2aI>

Are you a VicSRC Partner School?

Partnership discounts

Did you know that you can receive discounted event prices if you have a VicSRC Partnership?

If you are not yet a **Partner School** and would like to take advantage of discounted ticket prices to VicSRC events, simply select '**VicSRC Partnership (Annual School Partnership)**' at the start of your online registration. Or check about Partnership on-line at:

<https://bit.ly/2KpgGjr>



To sign up to the VicSRC
online e-newsletter ... visit:

<http://www.vicsrc.org.au/>

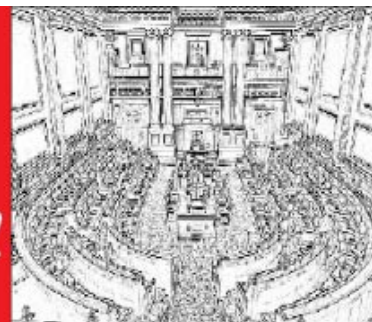


The **VicSRC** receives funding support from the **Victorian Department of Education and Training** and **Catholic Education Melbourne**.

It is auspiced by the **Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic)**.

It can be reached on **0436 476 612**
or by email: info@vicsrc.org.au

Victorian Students' Parliamentary Program



The **Victorian Students' Parliamentary Program** is an exciting opportunity for students to engage with parliamentary process and debate.



- By **participating** in the parliamentary conventions, students gain a greater understanding of parliamentary process through direct participation.
- By **speaking** in Parliament House at the State Conventions, students can develop greater confidence and public speaking abilities.
- By **engaging in discussion** with students from around the state, delegates develop a greater understanding of the issues debated as well as an appreciation for hearing different views.

Some may say Parliament is an odd venue for welcoming a diversity of opinion, but it is exactly the place for that to be happening. The formality of the event, held in the **Legislative Assembly of Parliament House**, makes for an amazing event.

Teachers

Teachers are not forgotten. We have a few professional development activities for you too as well as a host of interesting resources.

The Parliamentary Conventions are open to all schools across Victoria, Government, Independent and Catholic – and participation is **free**.

Places are very limited, so we are working on an extension program where students can run a parliamentary convention of their own back at school.

Local Schools' Parliamentary Conventions

Ten additional **local schools' parliamentary conventions** are being held across Victoria for secondary students, each hosted by a local school. This year those schools yet to hold these conventions are:

Monivae College, Hamilton	12/08/2019
Braemar College, Warrnambool	15/08/2019
Mornington SC, Mornington	23/08/2019
Irymple SC, Irymple	26/08/2019

You don't need to attend the convention closest to you if the dates don't suit.

Secondary Schools' Parliamentary Convention

Tuesday 3rd September!
Parliament House, Spring Street, Melbourne

Topic:

"Should we abolish the Legislative Council (Upper House) of Victoria?"

Head to www.second-strike.com to register your interest to attend.

Contact **David Mould** at **Second Strike** for more information or to get involved:

david.mould@second-strike.com

03 9071 1813

This long running program is supported by the Victorian Department of Education and Training.

*The **Victorian Students' Parliamentary Program** is also supported by Catholic Education Melbourne, Independent Schools Victoria, the Parliament of Victoria and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.*

ACSA 2019 CURRICULUM CONFERENCE

Friday 6 and Saturday 7 September 2019
Melbourne Zoo, Melbourne

EMPOWER...



ENGAGE...



ENRICH...



EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE...



Achieving educational excellence: through student empowerment, engagement and enrichment

The call to action of the 'Through Growth to Achievement' education review highlights the urgent need for educators and education systems to ensure that Australian students receive a world-class education that empowers, engages and enriches. This exciting conference will explore the key priorities identified that challenge a sustained, long term and coordinated improvement effort based on shared ambition, action and accountability. Providing opportunities for teachers, school leaders and academics to showcase best practice in addressing:

- Cultivating an adaptive, innovative and continuously improving curriculum that **empowers** students to take the reins of their own learning.
- Recognising new pedagogical approaches that **engage** every learner to be a creative, connected and engaged learner in a rapidly changing world.
- Exploring the use of data and research to **enrich** learning and feedback to **ensure** all students achieve at least one year's growth, every year.

EXPERIENCE

THIS CONFERENCE IS FOR EVERYONE with stimulating debate focusing on curriculum, assessment and pedagogy combined with exciting, innovative ideas including resources and teaching tools for you to use in your classroom!

You will participate in interactive workshops including use of the latest technology in the classroom, learning strategies to enrich student engagement, interactive approaches that empower students to engage as creative and connected learners; developing positive mindsets for student engagement and personalised learning; curriculum design for learning that matters and assessment design including the use of data and research to enrich learning and feedback.

To register and for further information including fabulous group discounts go to the conference website www.conference.acsa.edu.au

acsa





Professional Development Program

National DRANZSEN Forum

Date: Friday 30 August 2019

Venue: Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre

Time: 8.45am–3.30pm

Cost: Free

To register please visit www.afaconference.com.au/register

Event overview:

The Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR) is pleased to host the fourth National DRANZSEN Forum as part of the AFAC19 Professional Development Program.

The Disaster Resilient Australia New Zealand School Education Network (DRANZSEN) consists of representatives from education and emergency services, NGOs, universities, local government and community groups. Participants at this event will explore effective models for learning about natural hazards and disaster resilience to reduce risk and strengthen communities, through student participation and partnership for learning.

The National DRANZSEN Forum will explore:

- learning partnerships for disaster resilience through STEM
- youth perspectives on emergencies and disasters
- youth action for disaster risk reduction and community resilience
- national research and future directions for disaster resilience education
- innovative use of technology for investigating local hazards and risks.

Who should attend:

- School leadership teams and staff interested in STEM partnerships to reduce risk and build resilience in their local community.
- Emergency service representatives involved in youth and community education who want to share practice and collaborate with others.
- Representatives from the Department of Education, Catholic Education, and the independent schools sector.
- Subject-specific teacher associations, other agencies and affiliated organisations.

Disaster Resilience Education:

To develop safe and resilient communities, young learners need to understand the nature of hazards and risk in their local environment and their role in reducing exposure and vulnerability to harm. Disaster resilience education equips young Australians with the skills and opportunities to take protective action before, during and after an emergency or disaster.

Supported by:

Australian Institute for
Disaster Resilience 

A shift to the new norm: riding the wave of change

SAVE
THE
DATES!

2019 CONFERENCE CPR

Connect Protect Respect



UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Melbourne 8 August

Perth 16 August

Sydney 30 August

Canberra 6 September

Brisbane 20 September

WE ARE
COMING
TO YOUR
STATE

A DAY OF INSIGHTS

- ▶ **Keynote Presentations**
- ▶ **Student Workshop Stream**
- ▶ **School Staff/ Broader Community Workshop Stream**

KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

Connect. Understanding lived experiences of student voice (in)action.

DR JENNA GILLETT-SWAN

Protect. Being safe, healthy and ready to learn!

DR. ANDREW WICKING

Respect. School transformation through student voice, agency and participation –International best practice.

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CONTACT

Get in touch with Linsey if you want to find out more about the upcoming conferences via email
Linsey@wisawellbeing.com.au

Ethos:

Focus on student activism

Ethos is the journal of Social Education Victoria, the Victorian professional association for all who are interested in teaching about society and environment using integrated approaches to Social Education course content.

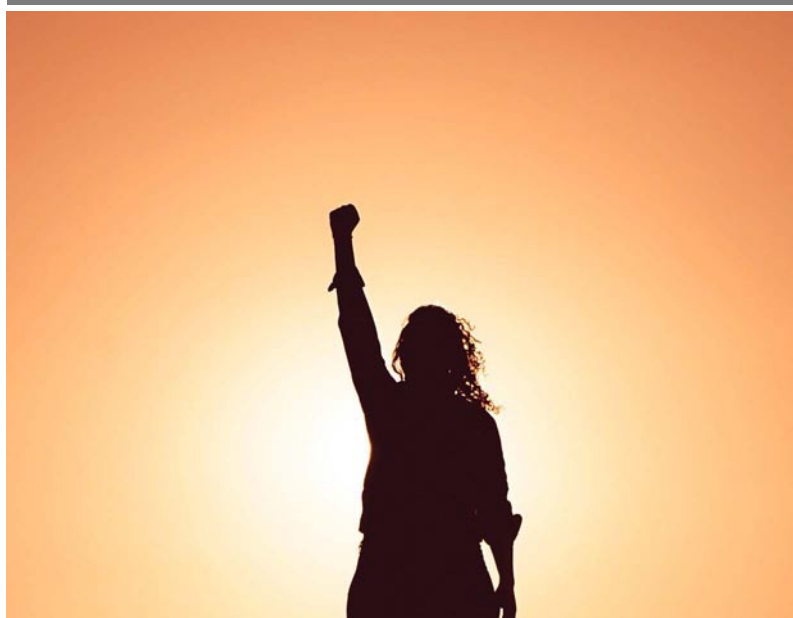
The current issue (Vol 27 No 3; Term 3, 2019) focuses on **student activism**, with articles about:

- student agency around climate change - seeking a curriculum response;
- the *Make Change Happen* project;
- classroom ideas for activities around young people's activism;
- the VicSRC's campaigns for students on School Councils and for representation on the VCAA;
- the Children's Council at the Guardian's **Blyth Street Early Learning Centre** in Brunswick, Victoria;
- active citizenship at **Alia College**;
- the experiences of a primary school climate change activist and a secondary school public transport activist.

Contact SEV at admin@sev.asn.au for copies and further information, or see the SEV website at: www.sev.asn.au

ethos

THE JOURNAL OF SOCIAL EDUCATION VICTORIA INC.



Inside: Focus on student activism

- Student agency around climate action
- Make change happen
- Activism for young people
- Take it to the council

The challenges of student voice in primary schools

Students 'having a voice' and 'speaking for' others

Eve Mayes, Rachel Finneran, Rosalyn Black

A new paper in the *Australian Journal of Education*, based on research in Victoria. The abstract says:

"Student participation in school decision-making and reform processes has taken inspiration from reconceptualisations of childhood. Advocates for student voice argue for the repositioning of children and young people in relation to adults in schools. This article works with data from a multi-sited case study of three primary schools and students', teachers' and school leaders' accounts of their student voice practices. We consider the relationships between

students in student voice activities in primary schools, and the possibilities and ambivalences of representative students 'speaking for' other students. We integrate recent insights from moves beyond voice in childhood studies, and from the turn to listening in cultural studies, and raise questions for students, teachers and researchers who seek to encourage student voice in primary schooling."



Donate to support *Connect*

Connect now has no income except donations and sales of literature (see page 42). By supporting **Connect** with donations, you keep us going. Even though we are now solely on-line, there are still

costs associated with publication. To make a donation to the work of **Connect**, use the form in this issue or contact us for bank account details in order to make an electronic transfer of funds.

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

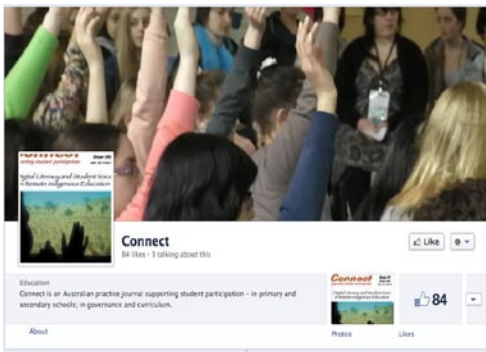
www.asprinworld.com/student_action_teams

'Student Councils and Beyond' On-Line! FREE!

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

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

www.asprinworld.com/connect



Connect on facebook



Connect has a presence on *facebook*. Find us at:

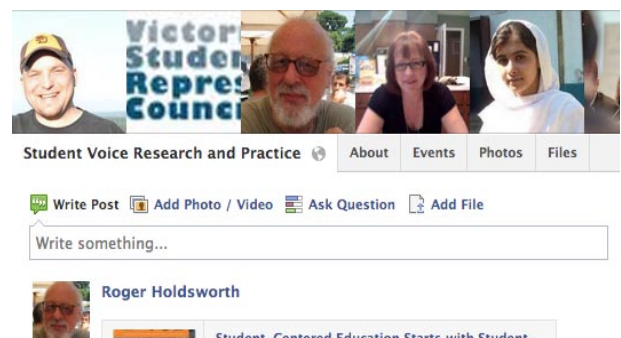
<http://ow.ly/L6UvW>

We've been posting some news and links there since June 2013, to complement and extend what you see in the on-line version of *Connect*. It would be great if you could go there and 'like' us, and also watch there for news of each *Connect's* availability on-line - for FREE.

Student Voice Research and Practice facebook group

www.facebook.com/groups/studentvoicepage/

This open *facebook* group was initially established by Professor Dana Mitra, and is now supported by the work of academics, practitioners and students throughout the world. It provides a valuable community of people working and interested in the area of 'Student Voice' - in Australia, USA, UK, Italy and elsewhere - as well as access to useful resources and examples, and up-to-date information about initiatives. You can easily log on and join the group at the above address.



Connect Publications: Order Form



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(§ check availability before ordering; * discounted rate for subscribers to **Connect**)

B: Total for publications: \$.....

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Clearinghouse

Contribute to *Connect*

Anyone may submit an original article to be considered for publication in *Connect* provided he or she owns the copyright to the work being submitted or is authorised by the copyright owner or owners to submit the article. Authors are the initial owners of the copyrights to their works, but by successfully submitting the article to *Connect*, transfer such ownership of the *published* article to *Connect* on the understanding that any royalties or other income from that article will be used to maintain publication of *Connect*.



ASPRINworld: the *Connect* website!

www.asprinworld.com/connect

Connect has a website at *ASPRINworld*. The *Connect* section of the website is slowly growing, with information about subscribing, index of recent back issue contents (hyperlinked to PDFs) and summaries of and order information for *Student Councils and Beyond*, *Student Action Teams*, *Reaching High* and *Switched On to Learning*.

**Connect is also archived
and available electronically:**

research.acer.edu.au/connect

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

www.informit.com.au

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



Articles from *Connect* are also discoverable through *EBSCOhost* research databases.

www.asprinworld.com/connect

&

research.acer.edu.au/connect

Local and International 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 and we'll work something out.

Australian:

A guide to voice and agency: Empowering students at Berwick College (Brodie Andersen, Berwick College, Vic) 2019

Ethos (Social Education Victoria, Brunswick, Vic) Vol 27 Nos 3: Term 3, 2019

How participating in a healthy eating project influenced a targeted group of at-risk students and their engagement in schooling (Kate Stevanovic, Vic) *Journal of the HEIA* 24 (1): 21-34; 2017

SEV Newsletter (Social Education Victoria, Brunswick, Vic) Vol 16 No 3; Term 3 2019

The challenges of student voice in primary schools: Students 'having a voice' and 'speaking for' others (Eve Mayes, Rachel Finneran, Rosalyn Black; Deakin University) *Australian Journal of Education* Vol 63 No 1; April 2019

International:

An architecture of ownership (Noeline Wright, Rachel McNae; The University of Waikato, New Zealand) *Teaching and Learning Research Initiative*; 2019

UP for Learning (Montpelier, Vermont, USA) Update: July 2019



39+ years ...
1979 to 2019 ...
www.asprinworld.com/connect

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see page 42

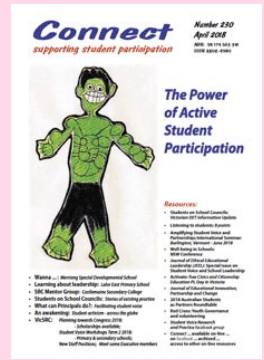
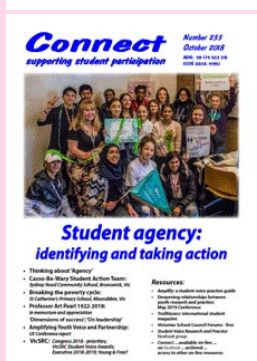
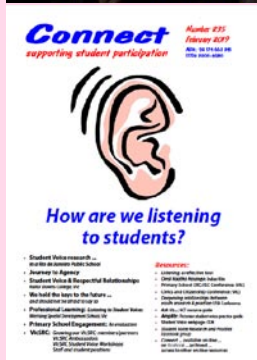
All issues of *Connect* from 1979 to the present (that's now well over **39 years!**) are freely available on-line! Thanks to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), all the issues of *Connect* have been scanned or uploaded into the ACER's Research Repository: **ACEReSearch**.

You can find these issues of *Connect* at:

<http://research.acer.edu.au/connect>

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

Connect has a commitment to the sharing of ideas, stories, approaches and resources about active student participation. We are totally supported by donations!



Let us know

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

Most importantly, please USE this resource.

All copies of *Connect* are available on-line ... for free!

<http://research.acer.edu.au/connect>